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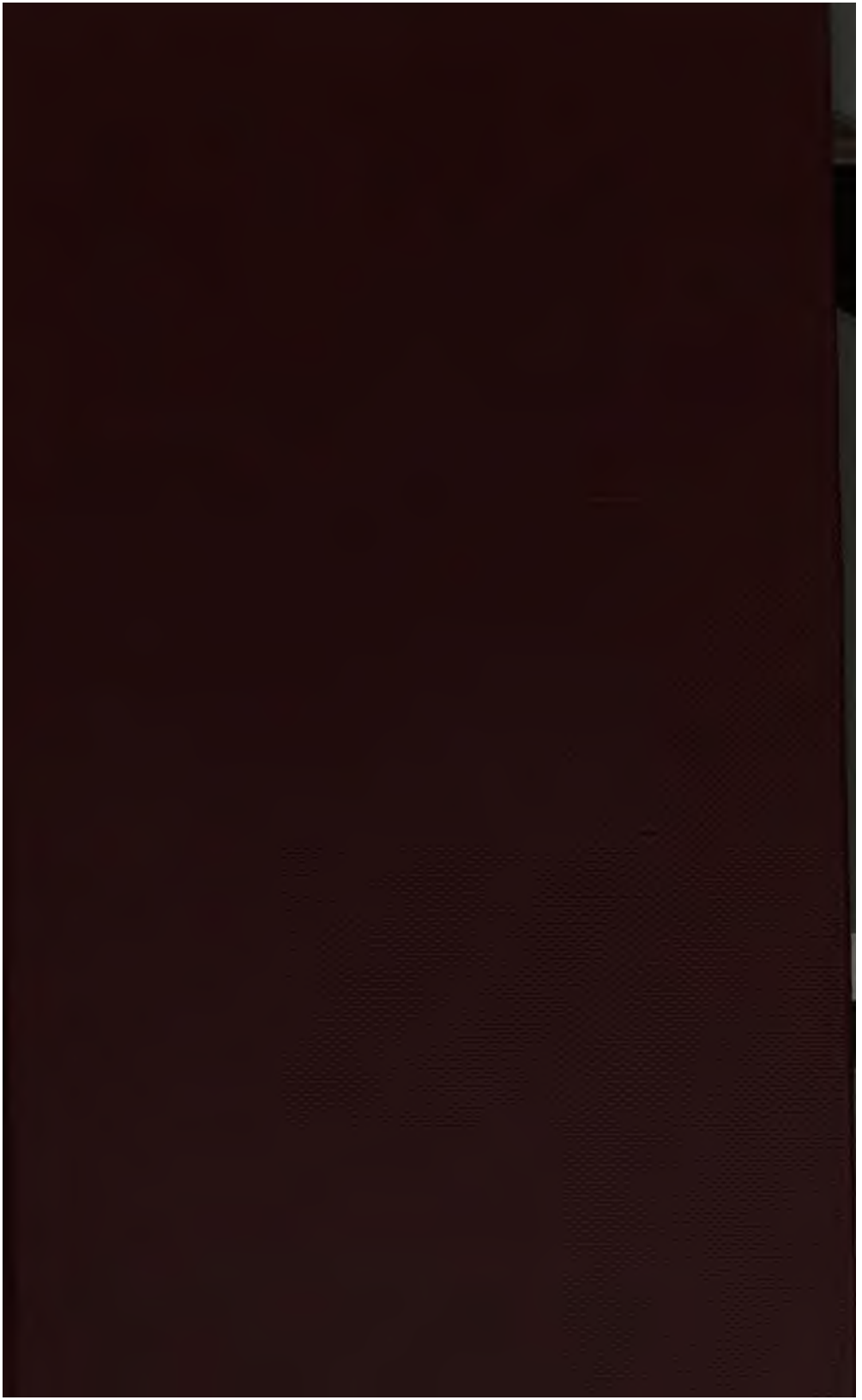
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ALFRED.

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ALFRED;

A

Romance in Rhyme.

BY

R. PAYNE KNIGHT.

SPECIOSA MIRACULA PROMAT.

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR

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PREFACE.

To trifle is the privilege of the last, as well as the first stage of human life; and this must be the Author's excuse in producing such a work as he here offers to the public. The composition of it hath afforded him much innocent amusement; and he therefore flatters himself that the perusal of it may afford some to others, though he shall not feel much disappointment in its failure: the taste of the present age being, as far as he is enabled to judge by its most popular productions, very different from that which he has imbibed from sources which he thinks more pure, and to whose purity and excellence the continued approbation of successive ages hath borne testimony. The facility too with which such works are now produced, and their consequent abundance, have sated appetite and damped curiosity; such being the overflow of genius and talent among us, that we have to boast of more than one poet, who can send forth yearly, or even monthly, compositions of this kind, of a

length which would formerly have employed a whole life of ordinary duration. The author has, however, the advantage of obtaining, in the more methodical exertions of slower or feebler faculties, equally continued amusement, from sources less copious, and means more compressed; and, in this last stage of his existence, the amusement of intellectual employment is the only source of happiness left: the organs of sense being too much blunted, their objects become too stale, and the prospects of futurity too limited in this world, to afford any real or reasonable gratification in the indulgences of pleasure, the visions of hope, or the speculations of ambition.

Though constructed on a regular, connected, and united plan, he hath not ventured to call his work an epic poem, lest its title should seem to challenge a comparison with others of a more grave and exalted character; and thus cause it to be estimated by a scale taken from merits of a higher class.

In dividing a composition, thus entire, into separate books or detached parcels, it seems proper that there should be some apparent cause or reason for such division: wherefore he hath followed the example of Ariosto in prefixing to each resumption of his narrative a few moral or prudential observations or reflections, arising out of, or connected with, the preceding or succeeding incidents of the fable.

In the supernatural agency, or what is commonly called the *machinery* of a poem, he hath adopted the system of emanations; as being the most pleasing and poetical, and not the least reasonable and authenticated, of the different modifications of Christianity, which have, in different ages and nations, been more or less generally received, and the only one entirely compatible with the now generally received system of the universe. It still forms the fundamental principle of the religions of a large majority of the human race, whom it were most impious to suppose that a just and merciful God hath created to damn eternally; and though not now acknowledged by any established sect of Christians, was extremely prevalent during the third and fourth centuries, as far as the writings of the learned and laborious Origen were circulated; that is, through all the Greek and Oriental churches. That it hath not been extended further, and continued longer, is most devoutly to be regretted, it being not only the most pleasing and poetical mode of faith, but the most charitable, mild, and moral; inasmuch as that it excludes that horrible article, which accuses an omnipotent and omniscient God, to whose intellectual view all causes and consequences, through the boundless duration of time and extent of space, must be equally present, of peopling the world, which he had made, with generations on generations — millions of

millions of his creatures, called into a short and precarious being here, to suffer endless torments hereafter; for an act of their common progenitor, which none of them could in any degree share, impede, or oppose; and of which all were, therefore, as entirely innocent as the child born yesterday is of the crime of his father who was hanged last year.

A noble poet, distinguished beyond all others by having squandered more talent than most others ever possessed, hath lately brought forward this article in a dramatic form, and exhibited it, emblazoned with all his usual vigor and glow of diction; which thus presented a spectre so monstrous and appalling, that even those who had most implicitly adored it in the dark were scared at it in the light, and wished to hide it from their view by a public prosecution; finding no other means of accommodating their belief to their consciences, than excluding the forms and matter of it from their thoughts, by suppressing all illustration of them: for in such illustrations alone do all the blasphemies of the Mystery of "Cain" consist, which is in no respect more blasphemous than the "Paradise Lost;" nor can any passage, perhaps, in the speeches of Cain or Lucifer be found equal in atrocious calumny to the imputation, brought by Belial against his Maker, of *saving to punish endless.* But the epic bard, being

a sincere and zealous believer, so adapted his moral sense to his religious creed, that the former approved whatever the latter sanctioned; while the noble dramatist, having his perceptions unshackled, was well aware how widely orthodoxy and piety differ, on certain points, from each other; and this difference he hath intentionally exhibited, and vigorously emblazoned.

Both poems might, indeed, have been justly prosecuted by certain extinct sects of Christians, as far as Christians can at all justly prosecute such matters: but neither can, with any degree of consistency, be condemned by any now existing; except, perhaps, the small and obscure one of the Swedenborgians, who have adopted, in a mode of their own, the system here to be employed.

Upon all that relates to a future state, Revelation hath left ample liberty for varieties of belief and opinion, the Mosaic having acknowledged none, but shewn man formed out of brute matter, quickened by the breath breathed into his nostrils; and though the Christian distinctly promises both rewards and punishments in another life, yet both the means by which they are to be respectively obtained or incurred, and the places, periods, modes, and degrees, in which they are to be respectively enjoyed or suffered, are so little

ascertained or defined, that there are still nearly as many fashions of belief as believers: all entirely differing from any that were entertained during the three first centuries of the church, when the Redeemer was hourly expected to return, according to his prediction, as it was then understood, and establish the kingdom of God on this earth; which was then supposed, conformably with the system of the cabalistic Jews, to be covered with seven solid vaults or firmaments, one above the other, occupied by different orders of the celestial hierarchy, — to the third of which Saint Paul was carried.

Of this expected kingdom of God upon earth, the Revelations of Saint John seem to describe a prophetic vision, veiled in part, to avoid giving offence, under symbolical images, such as that of the beast with seven heads and ten horns; signifying probably the Roman empire, whose capital was built upon seven hills, and whose frontiers were then guarded by ten provincial armies, severally stationed in Britain, Spain, Upper and Lower Germany, Pannonia, Dalmatia, Moesia, Syria, Egypt, and Africa. Other works of the same kind are recognized in the first collections of Scripture; but were omitted, as this was for a time, on the authority of synods, after the church had grown dominant, and prophetic visions of the coming of higher powers to

supersede those existing were no longer acceptable. That some were not retained, if any such there were, which decidedly and explicitly rejected the doctrines of universal, eternal, and equal damnation, is ever to be lamented; as nothing, perhaps, has operated so powerfully and extensively in hardening the human heart, and preparing it for the exercise of those atrocious cruelties which Christians have so abundantly exercised upon Christians, to whom no other crime was imputed than difference of opinion in matters the most abstruse and obscure: for, after all the excruciating and protracted agonies which the experienced ingenuity of the inquisitor, aided by the professional skill of his surgical ministers, could invent or inflict, he did but feebly imitate the God of his belief; and, horrible as might appear the sufferings of the victim fainting on his engine, or screaming in his kindled pile, he could consider them but as trifling, both in degree and duration, compared with those, to which he thus consigned him, under the judgment of that God, for all eternity. Even the monster Bernabos Visconti, Duke of Milan, — who decreed that the execution of a state criminal should last forty days, with a horrid detail of the tortures to be inflicted each day, the successive mutilations, and the intervals of repose which were to renew the expended sensibility of the sufferer and

qualify his nerves for other varieties of anguish,—must have felt that his own cruelties, exercised upon a few criminals, were no more to be compared to what his religion bade him impute to his God — the God too of justice tempered with mercy — than forty days are to eternity; than a few wretches, criminal in their own voluntary acts, are to millions of millions, criminal only in the involuntary heritage of a depraved nature; or than the organization of this perishable body is to that, which, being imperishable, will need no intervals of rest to recover its powers of sensation, but of which the capacity to suffer will be commensurate, both in degree and durability, to the penalties decreed. It was accordingly during the general prevalence of such doctrines under the Christian hierachy, from the sixth to the sixteenth century inclusive, that men became more depraved in their morals, more faithless in their engagements, more sanguinary in their wars, more fierce and relentless in their vengeance, both public and private, and more cruel and unjust in their punishments, than during any other period in the history of the civilized world.

If, therefore, the noble dramatist can, by placing them in their true light, make men ashamed of them, and draw off such noxious infusions from the mild and beneficent spirit which they pollute and embitter, let

hypocrites and fanatics call him by what names they please, he may console himself with the reflection of having done more essential good to religion, than all its orthodox expounders have done, since it first acquired a legitimate political establishment. Respect, indeed, in style and manner, is, in all cases, due from individuals, in every attempt to reform abuse or rectify error interwoven with the laws and constitution of their country: but to enforce silent acquiescence by pains and penalties, least of all becomes Christians, whose own religion arose in defiance of such restraint, and whose most revered saints and martyrs owe their posthumous honors to direct and open violation of it, and to the punishments consequently inflicted on them by the laws. Argument is their only legitimate weapon of defence; the principle of their religious existence standing in opposition to every other, and claiming freedom of discussion as an inheritance of right divine, transmitted to them from their consecrated founders, signed and sealed with their blood. All attempts, too, to deprive them of it will be found to be as ineffective as they are unchristian; for though the conviction and punishment of an author or editor may stop for a time the circulation of a particular work, they only stimulate and excite the spirit which produced it: and such

commentators on the Scriptures as have lately been prosecuted and imprisoned every village can supply; the system of universal education, now so much in fashion, sufficiently qualifying them, without any natural endowment but that of impudence; and the Bible Societies taking care to furnish them with materials, by putting into their hands a miscellaneous, and, in many respects, a most ambiguous, volume; which, though the source of all that is most valuable in truth to the wise and learned, becomes the source of all that is most pernicious in error, when misunderstood and misinterpreted by the vulgar — *quos acta Deorum sanctius et reverentius est credere quam scire* — who may learn pure morality and true religion by receiving with deference the interpretations and applications which they hear in their churches, but will only pervert or destroy both by reading, interpreting, and applying for themselves.

In the following work still greater liberties have been taken with the history, than with the religion, of the times of which it treats; poetry, even such as this, requiring too much of the marvellous to content itself with real matters of fact, and too much of sentiment to entangle itself in the dry details of real business. Its object is to excite feeling, rather than to enrich

memory; and to convey and impress general, rather than to record and inculcate particular, truths. History so remote, imperfect, and obscure, as that of our Saxon kings, allows the incorporation of fiction, in any proportion, without impairing the interest of the narrative; and should the author be deemed more successful, in treating the subject, than either of his predecessors, it will be owing to a more free use of this indulgence.

In delineating manners he has also looked more at human nature in general, than at the modes and habits of any particular age and nation; for it is impossible, in such compositions, to display the science of the antiquary without contracting some of his rust, and rendering, in some degree, stiff and dry that whose principal merit consists in flow and facility. During a long life, spent alternately in the indulgences and dissipations of polished society, and the contemplative tranquillity of studious retirement, the author has had more opportunities than are usually obtained by his brethren in rhyme, of rectifying the results of particular experience and observation by general reflection, and extensive comparison; whence he flatters himself that howsoever faulty and feeble his delineations may be in finish and execution, they will be found correct and true to nature in outline and design; a merit, indeed,

which does not seem, at present, to be held in high estimation.

The concluding reflections on the character and conduct of Napoleoné Buonaparté may, perhaps, seem harsh and uncharitable, now that he is gone to render his account before a higher tribunal than any which this world can afford: but, of that tribunal, usurpers, tyrants, and conquerors, seldom feel much awe; though few of them have been so hardened in depravity as, like Tiberius, to feel no deference to the judgment of posterity, nor anxiety for posthumous reputation. Howsoever, therefore, as Christians, we may wish them to find that mercy hereafter which they never practised here, it is our duty, as moralists laboring to avert the temporary evils and calamities of our fellow creatures, to speak of them only as they deserve; to strip successful wickedness of its baleful splendor; and, by holding it up to the scorn and detestation of after ages, turn the love of fame into the love of virtue; and prove to triumphant vice, that though fear may hide its turpitude in flattery, while it lasts, it cannot last long till the same impartial justice, which tears away the veil, makes the means of concealment an aggravation of the crimes concealed. It is only after the fall of such men that truth can dare to approach them; wherefore, to afford them the protection of the trite maxim, *de mortuis*

nil nisi bonum, would be completely to disarm historical justice, and to take from the mouth of unprincipled ambition the only curb from which it hath ever felt restraint.

Of all the personages of this description who have successively disturbed, dazzled, and desolated mankind, there is none whose history affords so much of this moral instruction as that of the one in question, no other having ever had such extensive means and such urgent motives for doing universal good, or so effectually accomplished his own ruin by perverting such vast means to directly contrary purposes. In no other instance did sordid selfishness ever display itself upon so large a scale, upon so exalted a stage, or in so wide a theatre; or so completely counteract all its own reasonable ends, by an immediate unqualified indulgence of all its base, greedy, and malignant passions, which, as they rendered him the most insolent and overbearing of mankind in prosperity, rendered him also the most peevish, fretful, and impatient in adversity. Even his personal courage, and spirit of enterprize, were thus deprived of all splendor, by being shewn to have sprung from mere mercantile calculation, applied by the strong nerves of a coarse organization to the lucrative speculations of a robber, without ever admitting into the account any one of the objects

of honorable and exalted ambition. The difference between this mercantile and predatory audacity, and the genuine courage of a high and noble mind, guided by a just sense of honor, is best illustrated, by exhibiting the different conduct of each in parallel situations of difficulty and danger.

At Munda, when Cæsar's infantry gave way, and the battle upon which his own fate and that of the civilized world hung seemed to be lost, he threw himself on foot into their first ranks, sent away his horse, and fought hand to hand with the enemy, so as to receive seven and twenty scars of different weapons on his shield. His soldiers, animated by his example, and alarmed by his danger, recovered their lost ground, and gained a decisive victory.

At Waterloo, when the French army, in similar circumstances, began to yield, the imperial guards devoted themselves, refused quarter, and perished to a man; but their commander, he in whose cause they died, ran away without having exposed his person to any danger; and, with armies still zealous and unbroken, sought only to save his own life by surrendering himself unconditionally to the generosity of that enemy whose generosity he best knew by having most abused, but from whose prudence he could expect nothing better than perpetual confinement, even more close

than what he suffered: for, acquainted as he was with the wasteful profusion of the British Government, he could scarcely have given it credit for such an excess of extravagance, as to incur an expence of nearly half a million a year, under the pressure of extreme penury, to maintain in captivity a Corsican military adventurer, born to nothing, and possessed of no acknowledged rank above that of any other French general of equal standing. It may be said, indeed, that after his abdication he was only accountable to his own feelings for the disposal of his own person; but, before his desertion and flight, he would surely have procured an amnesty for those who had violated their allegiance to the king, and incurred the penalties of treason in his cause, had he been susceptible of any one feeling or sentiment that was not solely and sordidly selfish: for though, through the king's extreme lenity, only a few suffered, yet, for all he knew, or seemingly cared, more than as many thousands might have been sacrificed. His fate, contrasted with that of George Washington, may afford a most salutary lesson to all future leaders of revolution, by teaching them that the surest means of freedom and happiness to themselves are the freedom and happiness of others; and thus rendering passions, the most base and selfish in their motives, most virtuous and beneficent in their ends.

His flattering ex-secretary, indeed, says, that he attempted to share the fate of his guards at Waterloo, but that the officers around seized his horse's bridle, and forcibly led him out of danger — certainly before he had entered into it; for no person near him was killed, or even hurt, during the whole engagement, while many fell close to the Duke of Wellington—and the same flattering secretary admits this to have been the fourth instance of his deserting his armies in distress; and that, in this, his desertion was as unwise as it was unmanly.

Nevertheless, were he still languishing in captivity, it would be unworthy of the high spirit of his conquerors to aggravate his humiliation by any thing like insult or reproach: but when he has received his final emancipation in this world, it becomes expedient that its remaining inhabitants should know the composition, form, and material of the idol to which they prostrated themselves, that they may be less ready to prostrate themselves to such another; of which there will never be any want, in times of tumult and revolution, the world doing them too much honor in supposing them to be rare productions. A mixture, in due proportions, of audacity, dexterity, and cunning, with an entire absence of those feelings and principles which slacken or obstruct its operation, is all that is required to form a Nadir, or a

Napoleoné; but, to constitute a William, or a Washington, requires a conjunction of qualities of a much more exalted and uncommon class. All are now equally before the tribunal of public opinion, whose proper and infallible organ is a free press; through which different pleaders may argue on different sides, with equally well founded confidence, that, while the organ remains free, the tribunal will be impartial; and, sooner or later, administer strict moral justice alike to all — as well to him who died yesterday, as to him who died a thousand years ago; who are, in the same degree, amenable to its authority. Respect, indeed, for the feelings of surviving relatives and friends may retard the promulgation of the sentence in the prior case; but for the person in question there can be no such feelings among Englishmen: against whom he made a war, avowedly of extermination; and, as a pledge of its being so, renounced all those intermediate communications for the protection of the defenceless and unoffending, and mutual redemption from captivity, which the governments of all other civilized nations, from that of the Macedonians to those of the present day, have allowed to mitigate the sufferings of humanity in the sanguinary conflicts of ambition. By *extermination*, is not, of course, meant the individual extirpation of every human inhabitant; but that entire extinction of rank, order, and property, with the disso-

lution of every other bond or tie of civil union, which one of the ablest of his fellow ruffians, Massena, meant when he said, that if once possessed of England, he would in six months render possession permanent by rendering it not worth contesting. Of this the burning of the Palatinate, by preceding French conquerors, afforded a precedent, that at once indicated the means and sanctioned the end; which a radically reformed Parliament, chosen according to the system of universal equality, under the auspices of a French military deputy, would have effectually confirmed and perpetuated, with very little assistance from their patrons.

As for the project of uniting the whole civilized world under one military monarchy, it was as extravagant in folly as in wickedness: for, even if it had been successfully accomplished, its immediate effect would have been to make the universal sovereign a mere tool and puppet at the disposal of his conquering armies; which, having no longer any thing to dread or oppose from without, would have turned all their restless and mischievous energies to the more attractive matters within, and have changed their nominal master as often as their greedy or angry passions, or the mere love of novelty, or satiety of ease, had stimulated them to action. Internal revolution, instead of external war, would have become their trade; the empire would have been con-

tinually put up to auction, and the bidder offering the most unbounded licence of plunder and profligacy have been constantly deemed the best: nor would the succession of bidders have failed, while the dangers of advancing or receding were equal, though each had found the imperial diadem to be nothing more than a funeral garland, decking and marking him out as a victim for slaughter. Such a state of things might have gone on, as it did under the military monarchy of the Romans, for a few centuries, till its necessary consequences — exhaustion, depopulation and barbarism — had so relaxed and enfeebled all its physical resources, and so broken and dissevered all its moral and political links of cohesion, that the body had become incapable of supporting its own weight, or wielding its own members; and consequently have fallen to pieces of its own accord.

In morals and politics, as in physic, similar causes necessarily produce similar effects; so that, after the experience afforded by one universal empire, no man of common sense and education could doubt the effects which must necessarily ensue from another. What terms, therefore, of reprehension, detestation, and execration, can adequately consign, to its merited infamy, the atrocious and flagitious malignity which would knowingly and deliberately subject the whole human race to such a state of hopeless calamity!

Nevertheless, we are naturally so much disposed to refer great effects to great causes, that every gigantic project of aggrandisement appears to have something awful and sublime in it, and to denote a gigantic and exalted mind in its author; which is so far from being true, that this selfish ambition, which seeks only power and dominion, is merely a modification of avarice, in no respect or degree less vile and odious than every other mode in which that base and sordid passion displays itself.

It may be said, indeed, that against such great and overwhelming crimes, as those which involve the fate of nations, neither the reclamations nor invectives of theoretical moralists are of any avail: but it may be answered, that it is not thereby the less their duty to make them; for, though too weak to crush the full-grown monster, they may do something towards impeding or paralysing the progeny, while yet in the germ or the egg. Even in private life, the arguments of philosophy, and the examples of history and poetry, have no influence in opposing those atrocious acts of wickedness upon the issue of which men stake their lives, fortunes, and reputations: but nevertheless they may operate in correcting errors and frailties, from which most of those acts derive their origin; at least nine-tenths of the wickedness of the world having its primary source in

its weakness and folly. It has, therefore, been the principal object of the Author's moral fictions to exhibit, in various modes, the natural and necessary progress of minds not ill organised, from the vicious indulgence of common frailties to the flagitious perpetration of enormous crimes; and if, in doing this, he hath rendered moral instruction more attractive, he hath rendered it more effective than it ever can be in the dry arguments of what is called good advice, which are never attended to by those who stand in need of them. Fables, whether epic or dramatic, are merely vehicles of morals and sentiments; and the merit of the vehicle, whether taken from reality or invention, is to be sufficiently plausible and impassioned to entice and fix attention; which, unless to works the reading of which is considered as a business, can only be won and kept steady by the excitement of moral feeling.

Of that more convenient than safe department of the fable, the re-appearance of the dead in the undefinable form of their ghosts, the author has confined the use to narratives of the personages of his tale, whose mental feelings were in a state that might naturally cause some delusion of corporeal sense, such re-appearances not being entirely consistent with the system of supernatural agency, which he has employed; though the possibility of them has been acknowledged by the mass of mankind

through all ages of the world, and is sanctioned by the authority of Scripture in the evocation of Samuel.

The licentious depravity of the monastic orders is exhibited as it is reported to have been at the time, and as it naturally would be, for reasons interwoven with the narrative, when freed from those restraints of discipline which alone can keep such fermentable and effervescent masses in order, and which must necessarily participate in the relaxation and debility of ill defined, ill regulated, and frequently contested governments.

The subject and plan of the work might naturally have led to more extensive and detailed descriptions of battles: but such matters have never come within the scope of the author's observation; and till he read "The Battle of Flodden Field," he really thought that they might as well have ended where they began, with the Iliad, in which they appeared to have been completely exhausted. Sir Walter Scott has, however, shewn that they were not; and it is extremely to be regretted that, with such talents, he should have suffered the interest of his fable to be destroyed by such a glaring inconsistency, as that of old Tantallon arming and equipping De Wilton to fight against his own king and country, immediately after the high and refined sense of loyalty displayed in his reception of Marmion. How easy would it have been to have brought about a disco-

very of De Wilton's being a Scotsman, a lost son, or relative, who might thus have encountered his rival in the field, and avenged his private wrongs in the public cause! It is not the want, but the waste of talent, that the present age has to lament; the prostitution of it to gratify the morbid appetite and disorganised digestion, not of the swinish, but of the apish multitude, who only require the stimulant of novelty, a constant ingredient in that which never lives to be old: but,

Sæpe stylum vertas, iterum quæ digna legi sint
Scripturus; neque, te ut miretur turba, labores,
Contentus paucis lectoribus.

HORAT. *Serm.* lib. 1. x. 72.

ALFRED.

BOOK THE FIRST.

"THE foe prevails — his squadrons sweep the plain;
No more our arms the unequal fight maintain:
Fall'n are the bravest chiefs; the meaner crew
Go scatter'd where victorious hosts pursue!
Shall then again the Dane behold me fly?
Or shall I meet my fate, and hopeless die?
No: — while this vital current swells my veins,
While firm the vigor of this arm remains;
Hence, cold Despair! success may yet be mine;
Some happier day may on my fortunes shine:
From shame to death the vanquish'd coward flies;
Life's last resource the truly valiant tries."
Thus Alfred spake, as Wilton's fatal field
He view'd, with fallen crest and batter'd shield:
His spear was shiver'd, and his blunted blade
No more its master's mighty arm obey'd:

Pierced was his cuirass, and his casque broke:
Bruised was his helm by many a sabre's stroke:
A Danish dart, as to the charge he led
His ruffled troops, had laid his courser dead:
His ensigns lost, his face with blood besmear'd,
No trace of royalty or rank appear'd:
A private warrior he escaped from view:
And from the field amidst heaps of slain withdrew.
 Thus as with weary steps he cross'd the plain,
A steed appear'd of some brave soldier slain:
He seized the reins and sprang into the seat;
Then sought with quicken'd pace some safe retreat;
Where watchful, yet conceal'd, he might attend
To every change that favouring heaven might send;
Collect his scatter'd force, and try once more
The waste of war with wisdom to restore:
And from experience, by disaster bought,
Draw whatsoe'er its schools severe have taught.
 As swift the steed his royal burden bears,
More faint the hostile shouts assail his ears;
The clamour sinks, and, with the fading day,
In broken murmurs slowly dies away:
Till now, in solitary wilds remote,
He hears alone love's soft harmonious note;
Alone, beneath the moon's ambiguous light,
He hears the solitary bird of night;

Save where the limpid waves, that glide below,
Mix their soft cadence, as they gurgling flow.
Descending there, he sought the rippling stream,
Whose bright reflections through the thickets gleam
Unbraced his arms, and in the crystal flood
Wash'd from his face and limbs the clotted blood;
Bound up his wounds; and in the thicket's shade,
That o'er the brook its solemn gloom display'd,
Of grass and leaves composed his humble bed,
And, on a mossy stone, reclined his head.
" Thus then what nature's wants require," he cried,
" By bounteous Nature is to all supplied.
Here, did no patriot cares disturb my breast,
Calm and contented could I sink to rest;
Fly from the world some shepherd's flock to tend,
And only ask for freedom and a friend.
Sweet bird of night, whose peaceful music charms
My ears, long deafen'd by the din of arms,
Why cannot man, like thee, his life employ
Indulgent Nature's blessings to enjoy?
Was then our boasted reason only given
To move the scorn of hell, the tears of heaven;
With more refined contrivance to invent
The deadly means of mutual punishment;
Through seas of blood to hunt the bubble fame,
And make creation's glory nature's shame? —

But vain is thought: each must his task fulfill,
Assign'd by fate or providential will.
'Tis thine in notes of love to hail the spring;
'Tis mine to die or triumph as a king:
And whatsoe'er th' event — let blind renown
Or blast with censure, or with glory crown —
Yet shall not virtue's toils and cares be vain;
Its own exertion is its surest gain.
Forlorn in exile, or in power great;
In splendor's domes, or poverty's retreat,
Guarded in dungeon deep, or on a throne,
Its best reward must still remain its own:
Applauding Conscience, by no stings alarm'd, —
Hope firm in life, — of terrors death disarm'd."
He said — and conscious Virtue soothed his breast,
Assuaged his pains, and lull'd his cares to rest;
Honor's bright visions hover'd round his head,
And dreams of bliss in balmy slumber shed.
Near to his lord the weary courser stood,
Grazed the green turf, or browsed the leafy wood:
Spring's genial gales diffused their fragrance round,
And freshening dews bespangled all the ground.
Nature seem'd lull'd to rest — when, hark! the cries
Of bitterest anguish 'midst the thickets rise!
A female voice of horror and affright
Bursts through the tranquil stillness of the night:

Shrilly it sounds, — and now approaching near,
More loudly echoes in the slumberer's ear.
He starts, and grasps his sword — then, undismay'd,
Springs swiftly forward to the sufferer's aid.
Just in the precincts of the wood he found
A beauteous damsel prostrate on the ground;
While two fell ruffians, helpless as she lay,
Held her white limbs, and tore her robes away.
Forward he sprang, and with his glittering blade
Dead at his feet the one fell spoiler laid.
Instant the other, rising with a bound,
Snatch'd up his sword and buckler from the ground.
A chief he seem'd of no ignoble name;
His shield and crest his Danish blood proclaim.
Furious he rushes on th' intrepid foe,
And at his helmless head directs the blow:
Cautious the king eludes th' unequal fight,
Amid the glimmerings of th' uncertain light;
And, bending low to shun th' impending wound,
Clasps the tall Dane, and hurls him on the ground;
Then points his sword; and, as he struggling tried
In vain to rise, mark'd where his arms divide;
Where join'd his breast-plates meet, and opening part, —
There forced it through, and plunged it in his heart:
With a deep groan he yields his parting breath,
And sinks indignant in the grasp of Death.

To save the damsel swift the victor sped;
Consoled her tears, and raised her drooping head.
With downcast looks the trembling, blushing maid,
Beheld her shoulders bare, her breast display'd;
And, with her fallen tresses, vainly tried
Her panting bosom's ivory charms to hide.
The king respectful turn'd his eyes away,
And stepp'd aside to where the spoiler lay;
Stripp'd off th' embroider'd scarf, which still he wore,
And back the trophy to the maiden bore:
Which, o'er her snowy shoulders, as he threw,
Her hands its borders round her bosom drew;
Then raised from earth, she view'd the godlike man,
In silent awe, awhile, then thus began:—
"Has then some angel from yon spangled skies
With pity heard a helpless virgin's cries?
Wrapt in thy form, some minister of light
Come down to end the horrors of this night?
Say, shall I bow with gratitude or fear;
Respect the mortal, or the God revere?"
"With juster thought," the pious king replies,
"Revere th' etherial missives of the skies;
Or if thou think'st some angel set thee free,
Behold his humblest instrument in me —
A wretched fugitive from Wilton's plain,
Where England bleeds beneath the conquering Dane."

" Ah! if thou comest," she cried, " of Saxon race,
Fly — swiftly fly — the horrors of this place:
From yon dread scenes of blood and death retire —
See! far around the country wrapt in fire.
See the red glare reflected in the skies!
And, hark! I heard the dying victims' cries.
See! where embosom'd in yon tufted wood,
High o'er the stream, my father's mansion stood,
How sunk in flames a shapeless mass it falls,
While clouds of smoke invest its tottering walls!
There too, my father, butcher'd in his age,
Lies a pale breathless relic of their rage;
My father, late proud Sarum's honour'd lord,
Now the scorn'd victim of a robber's sword!
My valiant brother too, perhaps is slain;
He also fought on Wilton's fatal plain.
And thou, my more than brother, more than sire,
Perhaps some Dane beholds thee now expire! —
Unhappy Edwin — generous, mild, and brave!
Ah! let me share thy sad untimely grave."
She said, and sunk upon the monarch's breast,
While sobs and tears her faltering voice suppress:
The monarch strove, with mild parental care,
To sooth the anguish of her deep despair.
" Not all," he cried, " who on this dreadful day
Have bravely fought, are now the invader's prey.

Many, when hope no more their breasts inspired,
Reserved their valour, and at last retired.
Such was my doom — perhaps 'twas Edwin's too —
We pay, not squander, what's our country's due.
Heaven, that beheld me every danger try,
Knows that no warrior more deserved to die:
But life still as a public trust we hold,
Never to waste, though still to spend it bold.
Then come: — the fleeting moments swiftly fly:
The night recedes, and pressing danger's nigh.
My steed is ready: here then, mount behind;
Ere yet 'tis morn some refuge we may find."
This said, the courser he again bestrode;
Secure behind the timorous damsel rode:
Yet oft look'd back, and oft in pale affright
Shrunk from the fancied visions of the night;
And where the foliage glitter'd in the dew,
Saw gleaming swords and glittering helms pursue;
Heard barbarous yells in every passing wind,
And horses' feet pursuing close behind:
Then, as returning sorrow drown'd her fear,
She call'd on Edwin — and she dropt a tear.
" Ah! what have I to dread?" she oft would cry;
" Perhaps for me 'tis happiness to die!
Perhaps the best, that Heaven can now bestow,
Is here at once to lay my sorrows low;

Blot out what living memory must retain,
And end, with sense of being, sense of pain!"
Thus on they went, till slow in twilight grey
Arose the morn, and doubtful dawn'd the day:
Reviving colors tinged the spangled ground,
And half distinct the landscape glimmer'd round:
The joyous lark, on pleasure's wings upborne,
Mounts in the sky, and hails the brightening morn;
While murmuring zephyrs every note prolong,
And waft o'er earth's expanse his heavenly song:
Then clamorous dogs announce that now the swain
Unpens his flocks, and drives them to the plain:
The mower seeks the mead with spirits blithe,
And chants his ditty while he whets his scythe.
Anxious the monarch cast his eyes around,
And near a peasant's humble dwelling found;
Close on the outskirts of a hanging wood,
Low in a vale the neat-built cottage stood:
A garden's cultured sweets exhaled before,
And bowering woodbines hung around the door;
Above a mantling vine its tendrils spread,
And ivy cluster'd round the chimney's head.
He turn'd his weary steed, and sighing cried,
"Here let us seek awhile our griefs to hide:
Here let us shun the dangers of the light,
And wait again the friendly shades of night."

This said, as nearer to the cot he drew,
The venerable master met his view:
An aged swain before the door appears,
With body shrunk, and mind matured by years;
Like the mild evening of a summer's sun,
Whose heat grows fainter as its course is run;
But undiminish'd still its light remains
To gild the mountains, and to cheer the plains.
The monarch hail'd the venerable man,
And as a humble suppliant, thus began: —·
" Ah! if thou feel'st thy bleeding country's woes,
Save the poor victims of our common foes;
The battles' wrecks, by force unequal prest,
Who ask one day's concealment, food, and rest.
At least this beauteous mourner kind receive,—
Comfort her sorrows, and her wants relieve;
And know, should Heaven our country's cause restore,
The suppliants, who now beg before thy door,
May live thy friendly bounty to repay,
And make thee bless the fortunes of this day."
" Talk not of pay," the hoary swain replied,
" My roof was never to distress denied;
And equally thy words and mien proclaim,
Thou art a warrior not unknown to fame;
One who has felt the gleams of brighter days,
And merited his grateful country's praise.

I too, when youthful vigor swell'd my veins,
Have shared the dangers of embattled plains,—
Have shared their glories too: though now decay'd,—
Though time has on my wasted sinews prey'd,—
What once I was with ardor still I love,
And all my words profess my deeds shall prove.
Then deign to enter this my humble door,
And share the hearty welcome of the poor."
Thus ceasing, with attention meek and kind
He help'd the weary damsel from behind;
And to the aged partner of his bed
With care her tottering footsteps slowly led;
Till, o'er the threshold past, he mildly said:—
"Welcome, fair stranger: here in calm repose,
Forget awhile thy sufferings and thy woes;
Here may'st thou rest from every danger free,
Protected by the guard of poverty:
For, as Heaven's lightning, when the storm descends,
Alone the giants of the forest rends,
Nor on the humble shrubs that spring below
Deigns to inflict th' inevitable blow;
So war's dire tempests, that now rage around,
Beat down the mighty, and the great confound,—
Pass o'er the poor and solitary shed,
That nightly hides th' o'erlabor'd peasant's head.

We, who have nought that avarice can allure,
Amid the general wreck may sleep secure."
Meanwhile his aged wife the bed prepares,
Then leads her, trembling, up the narrow stairs;
Then with a mother's care her limbs undrest,
And softly soothed her troubled soul to rest.
The king unharness'd first his weary steed,
Then turn'd him in the wood's green glade to feed;
Within the cot his armour then unbraced,
And piece on piece in ready order placed;
Then on his shield his o'ertoil'd head reclined,
And all his cares to tranquil sleep resign'd.
The aged swain his daily task pursued,
And drove his flocks to seek their flowery food.
To entertain her guests his wife prepares,
And plies with anxious zeal her household cares;
Brings forth each dainty from her treasured hoards,
And all her little dairy's wealth affords.
But when again the day began to fade,
And every tree diffused a lengthen'd shade;
When mild and grateful to the wearied sight,
In streams oblique, flow'd down the western light; —
His home again the shepherd slowly sought,
And back his scatter'd flock before him brought;
Which in the accustom'd fold secure he pent,
Then sought the cot, and to the stranger went.

The king, arisen from his humble bed,
Still pensive sat, and low reclined his head;
While, widely wandering, all his thoughts explore
What means are left his country to restore.
The bleating flocks the damsel's slumbers broke: —
At first unconscious of her woes she 'woke,
Till memory slow recall'd her hapless state,
As near she saw her aged hostess wait;
And each surrounding circumstance combined
To chase soft sleep's delusions from her mind;
And raise, in phantoms dire of wild affright,
All the past horrors of the fatal night.
Yet still refresh'd and strengthen'd by repose,
Serene and tranquil from the bed she rose;
And bow'd with humble gratitude to Heaven,
That this small respite to her woes had given;
That in the hour of need had deign'd to send
Th' avenging hero and the virtuous friend;
Rescued her feeble frame from lawless lust,
And laid the spoilers bleeding in the dust.
This done, around her waist the vest she drew,
And o'er her limbs the robe and kirtle threw;
Bound up the ringlets of her flowing hair,
With artful negligence and giddy care;
And, whilst unconscious of her own design,
Felt Beauty's natural wish, and strove to shine,

That he at least, who had such danger braved
To save her, might not scorn what he had saved.
 The scarf she then resumed which late she wore,
And which the hero from the spoiler tore;
But as th' embroider'd folds she eager view'd,
Pale grew her cheek, and horror chill'd her blood:
She recognised the work her hands had wove,
And given to Edwin, a last pledge of love;
A last sad pledge, on that disastrous morn
Which saw him from her fond embraces torn,
Just when the holy priest had join'd their hands
And hearts in wedlock's consecrated bands;
But summon'd at his country's call he hied,
And for the field of death forsook his bride.
Aghast she look'd: "Then Edwin is no more!"
She faintly cried, and fell down on the floor.
Dim grew her eyes—her blood was cold—her breath
Seem'd stifled in the icy grasp of Death.
 The matron calls for help—the king appears,
And out the door the quivering body bears:
There, as around her play'd the freshening breeze,
She felt each sense revive by slow degrees;
Felt the warm tide of life again arise,
Move her pale lips, and light her languid eyes:
But sinks again entranced, as conscious thought
Back to her mind her Edwin's image brought.

Thus long in vain her struggling senses strove
Against the anguish of despair and love,
Till wearied passion droop'd in calm repose,
And slow the scatter'd rays of reason rose:
Exhausted phrenzy sunk in grief sedate,
And silent sorrow brooded o'er its fate.

And now, the supper served, each anxious tried
To soothe the sorrows of the widow'd bride.
With many a scrap of rustic lore, the swain
Seeks to console and mitigate her pain;
With honest zeal commends his simple food,
And shows how God sends all things for our good;
How man was form'd that general good to share,
And every partial ill content to bear:
For partial ills we all are doom'd to know;
Since suffering is the lot of all below.

But vain alike his comfort and his cheer,—
Who comfort need will seldom comfort hear;
And moral Wisdom, like a prudent friend,
When wanted most, can least assistance lend.
Entranced in grief, with deep convulsive sighs,
To Heaven the beauteous mourner lifts her eyes.

"O that amid last night's dire deeds," she cried,
"I too, unconscious of thy fate, had died!
But over all some evil demon reigns,
Who mocks our sufferings and enjoys our pains:

Who first our heads to direst misery bends,
Then, to prolong our woes, our lives extends;
Yet cuts the frail and perishable thread
Where milder spirits happier fortunes shed.
If justice rule the world, let Death attend
One who now courts his presence as a friend.
Ah! let him spare the happy, proud, and gay,
Who still, though old, for lengthen'd being pray;
And strike a wretch, in life's meridian bloom,
By early sorrows ripen'd for the tomb,—
Nature's lorn outcast, torn from every tie!
Sure helpless weakness may from misery fly;
And pitied, not accursed, spontaneous die!"

The shepherd starts, and cries "Rash maid, beware!
To blame the high behest of Heaven forbear.
Dark and uncertain is man's feeble mind,
Misled by error, and in doubt confined.
The eye of Providence alone can see
What makes our happiness or misery;
And oft its means are transient ills, that tend
Obliquely to some good and happy end.
But listen, and a tale I'll tell shall show
What dire effects from rash despair may flow;
What dreadful punishments on those attend
Who dare the justice of their God offend;

Who dare with licensed tongue his deeds arraign,
Or rashly of his just decrees complain."
Instant attention seized each silent guest,
Whom, supper ended, thus the swain addrest:—
"On yonder brow, which overhangs the plain,
There lately dwelt a proud and wealthy thane.
I knew him well:—full oft his echoing horn,
And clamorous hounds, have here disturb'd the morn.
A blooming daughter was his only heir,
Child of his age, and darling of his care;
Whose wealth and beauty soon allured a crowd
Of suitors; and among them Edward bow'd.
A simple swain he was, of soul refined,
Of polish'd manners and accomplish'd mind;
But fortune on his humble birth had frown'd,—
Nor hoarded stores, nor wide domains he own'd:
Yet Emma's love preferr'd his modest worth
To all the power of wealth or boasts of birth.
"Not so her father:—he, with lordly pride,
His suit rejected, and his prayer denied;
Bade him for ever shun his guarded door,
Nor dare approach his beauteous daughter more.
In vain his daughter pleads, with many a tear,
Their plighted loves:—the thane refused to hear;
And sternly bade her better learn to know
What to herself, her birth and station owe;

Nor meanly think to bury in disgrace
The ancient splendors of her noble race.
Abash'd she yielded to the stern behest,
And nourish'd silent sorrow in her breast;
Till moping melancholy slowly stole
O'er all her faculties, and numb'd her soul:
From every social pleasure she withdrew,
And solitary sadness only knew.

" In Edward's breast a fiercer passion glows:
He palls in action, and he hates repose.
In vain from place to place he restless flies,
And every art to soothe affliction tries:
Despair and grief each secret dwelling find,
And distant Emma still frequents his mind.
He sees her all her father's rigors prove,
The sole reward of her too faithful love;
Her tender voice in plaintive notes he hears,
And sees her wasted cheeks bedew'd with tears;
Feels that from him alone her sorrows flow,
That he's the guilty cause of all her woe.
The thought with madness all his bosom fires,
And rash despair, and headlong rage inspires.

" ' Hence to th' embattled field,' he cried, ' I'll go:
Some lucky javelin there may lay me low:
There, in my country's cause, I'll bravely prove
My heart at least deserved my Emma's love.

Nor shall her cruel father dare to say,
A cringing coward stole that love away.
When I am gone, perhaps his soften'd mind
To thee, dear Emma, may again be kind.'
" It was the time, when arm'd on Hengston's plain
Our valiant Egbert met th' invading Dane;
It was the morning of that glorious day,
Which saw us triumph in the bloody fray;
When Edward came, in sable armour drest,
Though bright his shield, and white his plumed crest:
Light o'er the field I saw his courser bound,
While streams of blood imbrued the purple ground:
Where'er the battle fiercest raged he flew,
Beat down whole squadrons, and deep ranks o'erthrew;
Till pierced at length he tumbled on the plain,
And bleeding lay 'midst heaps of warriors slain.
" Swiftly the news was o'er the country spread;
And Emma heard the faithful youth was dead:
She also heard th' admiring realm proclaim
His matchless valor, and immortal fame.
Sudden her silent grief to fury turn'd;
Revenge and hatred in her bosom burn'd;
She accuses Heaven — at God's high justice rails,
And thus her sire, with impious words, assails: —
" ' By thy relentless and unfeeling pride,
The brave, the virtuous, faithful Edward died —

By thee, a worthless burden on the earth,
Who liv'st but to disgrace thy boasted birth;
While deeds of glory his high worth proclaim,
And beam eternal splendors on his name.
And yet, by thee he died! — All-seeing Heaven!
Is it then thus your partial favor's given?
Shall selfish pride securely guarded lie,
In sensual sloth, to bid the valiant die?
Surely some fiend accursed this world misrules,
The friend alone of cowards, knaves, and fools!'

" Thus did she rave, till wearied out at length
Passion subsided with exhausted strength;
When in her chamber all alone she sate,
In sullen sorrow, gloomy, and sedate,
Each softer feeling was absorb'd in pride,
She scorn'd the world, and all its wrongs defied;
Resolved no more its fallacies to try,
But, like her Edward, unsubdued to die.

" With hand, then firm and steady as her soul,
She mix'd th' ingredients of the deadly bowl;
And thrice invoked and bless'd her hero's name,
While bursting tears a milder mood proclaim;
But soon again, in dark despair and pride,
These soft emotions of her heart subside.

" 'Tis this,' she cries, and grasps the bowl, 'must close,
In death's eternal slumbers, all my woes:

At least from this vile world 'twill set me free,
And then —let Heaven or Hell my fate decree.
The wretch, who here endures life's bitterest curse,
Needs dread no change — it never can be worse.'

" Dark was the night: — it was the fatal hour,
When o'er the earth ill-boding spirits lour:
She heard the owl, with shrill and dismal cry,
Flap his broad wings, and near the window fly;
And next she heard, or faintly seem'd to hear,
What might the distant clink of arms appear;
With horses' feet, that near and nearer sound,
And now beneath the window beat the ground.
She starts and listens: — straight a voice she hears,
Which roused her spirits, and dispell'd her fears.
'Twas Edward's voice! — ' Awake, my love,' he cried,
' Thy faithful Edward comes to claim his bride:
From Hengston's camp he comes, so haste away;
Our time is short, and dangerous is delay.
Not far remote a priest attends to join
Our hands and hearts, and make thee ever mine.'

" The vital blood to Emma's cheek returns,
Her spirits mount, her heart with rapture burns.
She opes the window, —'twas her Edward's face,
His lofty stature, and his manly grace.
His visor up that much-loved face display'd;
The rest in sable armour was array'd,

Which dim, the lamp that glimmer'd in the room,
And faintly show'd through midnight's thickest gloom.
Aloft he stretch'd his arm, on which reclined,
She leap'd upon the steed, and sat behind.
Loose was her flowing robe, her bosom bare,
Her curling tresses wanton'd in the air;
She clasp'd her hero; swift the bounding steed
Rush'd down the hill, and flew across the mead.
" But now the dreary darkness of the night
Awakes her thoughts to horror and affright;
No more she sees the form her arms enfold,
She felt the hand that press'd her hand was cold.
The sable dress inspires her soul with dread:
It was the mournful livery of the dead.
Trembling she finds the black gigantic steed
Fly o'er the lawns with more than mortal speed;
Still onward rushing, to no road confined,
He seems to leave the passing breeze behind.
Often this wonderous swiftness she admires,
And oft, how far they've yet to go enquires:
But cold and sullen now became her guide,
And scarce to aught she anxious ask'd replied.
She feels distrust, and starts with sudden fears;
And now she doubts her eyes, and now her ears.
'Twas Edward's voice she heard; but still she found
Something was harsh and hollow in the sound:

The words and accents still appear'd his own;
But in the warrior's, not the lover's tone.
'Twas Edward's form and mien; but still she spied
Some gestures that announced a sterner pride.
'Twas Edward's face; but yet a fiercer fire
Flash'd from his eyes, and seem'd the glance of ire.
Doubts rise from doubts: ill-boding fears excite
Each fancied vision that appals the sight:
Dire spectres round her seem to ride the air;
She hears them croak, and sees their eye-balls glare:
Her spirits sink. — When now at length they came
Where from a window beam'd a feeble flame;
It seem'd a convent;—there he stopt and said,
'Here dwells the priest; art thou prepared to wed?'
"Sternly he spoke, nor for her answer waits,
But drives his horse up to the iron gates:
The iron gates were lock'd; with jarring sound
The bolts fly back, the clattering springs rebound:
The gates recoiling on their hinges swing,
And high above the vaulted portals ring.
He rushes forward:—she, in wild amaze,
Sees his changed form emit a sudden blaze.
His bulk expands:—aloft his stature rose;
A sable wing from either shoulder grows:
He turns his face—'tis Edward's now no more;
He speaks—his voice in thunder seems to roar.

She screams and falls: the hideous phantom cries,
While livid lightning flashes from his eyes—
" 'Henceforward learn thy stubborn soul to bend,
With meek respect to what thy God shall send:
Thy life's a sacred trust, which free from bane
'Tis thine to guard till He its end ordain.
'Tis His alone to shorten or extend;
'Tis thine to wait the summons He may send:
Not thus, when transient ills thy virtue try,
A base deserter from thy post to fly.
Thy sight is short, thy comprehension small,
But He at once surveys and judges all.
By Him alone are rightly understood
The doubtful ways of evil and of good.
Perhaps hadst thou become young Edward's wife,
In guilt and misery thou hadst closed thy life;
Perhaps the dart which sunk him in the grave
Was sent his life from direr ills to save.
When Heaven chastises, man must kiss the rod:
For just and wise are all the ways of God.'
" The phantom spoke, and vanish'd from her sight:
Senseless she lay until returning light
Appear'd; and, summon'd by the morning bell,
Each holy sister left her narrow cell.
Then in the garden, near the gate, they found
Poor hapless Emma prostrate on the ground.

Slowly her sense returns; but never more
Her mind regain'd the calm it knew before.
Still pining in yon convent's solemn gloom,
She waits to end her miseries in the tomb;
Despair's rash victim—sad Affliction's child,
In moody madness, sorrowfully wild.
But still she oft, in lucid hours, relates
Her flight, and all its circumstances states;
The spectre's form and speech; how vast his steed;
How swift, and yet how easy was his speed;
And how he bore her in a distant round,
Till near her home he dropp'd her on the ground,
Scared at the thundering tones, and aspect dread,
With which the black gigantic spectre fled.
"Yet some there are who still attempt to prove
That, frantic grown with anger, grief, and love,
She did, but in delusive slumbers, stray
To where instinctive habit taught the way;—
The way to yonder turrets, o'er the green,
Which long her infancy's abode had been:—
That thither, by fantastic visions led,
Asleep, and all unconscious had she fled;
Dreaming of spectres, which bewilder'd thought
Had, out of memory's wrecks and remnants, wrought;
After the opiate beverage of her bowl,
In trance ecstatic had immerged her soul.

" So argues vain conceit and bloated pride,
Which trusts frail sense, and nothing trusts beside;
Denying all that faith relies on here,
And thus renouncing hope, much more than fear:
For fear of what hereafter may ensue
Not e'en the stoutest wholly can subdue;
And if they could, too high a price were given,
If, for it, they renounce all hope in Heaven.

" While daily wonders, which all thought confound,
Above, below, on every side surround,
Shall man's weak erring reason dare define,
Or circumscribe th' extent of power divine?
Can we, in this small speck of time and space,
Bounds for Omnipotence presume to trace;
Or, by terrestrial reason's doubtful laws,
Set limits to the universal Cause?

" What warning spectres may from heaven descend;
Or where, o'er land and sea, their courses bend;
Or, for what purposes may come or go,
Is more, perhaps, than even angels know.
Our humble duty is but to receive
The warnings sent, — obey them, and believe."

BOOK THE SECOND.

As, when from some lone mountain's lofty brow,
A stranger views th' extended plains below,
Wide rivers, lakes, and lawns, and stately trees,
And fanes, and palaces, distinct he sees;
While every ditch, and lane, and cot, and stye,
Conceal'd and lost 'mid grander objects lie:
So youths and maids, when tender passions sway,
Each other's minds, with general view, survey;
Nor see, nor think, what lurks beneath the smiles
Of flattering pleasure, which the sense beguiles,
While gaily fluttering through the airy round,
Where busy follies busy cares confound.
 But soon domestic intimacy shows
Whate'er the soul's interior cells enclose;
Each narrow, intricate, and barren spot,
Where vice and frailty fix their secret blot;
Which fancy strove, while led by love, to hide,
But blazons now, forsaken by her guide.
 Then cloy'd possession cold indifference breeds;
And first ill-humour, and next hate succeeds:

Then worldly cares and anxious fears perplex,
And blasted hopes and wayward children vex;
Till, strength decreasing with increasing strife,
They only live to curse the load of life;
And barb with mutual wrongs each woe they feel,
And ope each sore oblivion else might heal.
Then, ah! ye blooming nymphs and tender swains,
Shun transient pleasures bought with lasting pains:
Ere love becomes of power supreme possest,
Expel the lurking tyrant from your breast:
Let friends or parents, by experience wise,
Control your ardor, and your hearts advise;
And learn that still, as brighter burns the fire,
The sooner must its wasted heat expire;
And that th' exhausted ashes, which remain,
No breath can blow to light or life again.
Let not despair nor sorrow rend your hearts,
When join'd affections ruling reason parts:
For know that, did no force those hearts divide,
The sated passion would itself subside.
It sprang from earth, while prudence came from heaven,
To steer life's erring course, in mercy given:
Obey its dictates, nor suppose the light
Of heaven too splendid, though it pain the sight.
So taught the rustic sage: then to his bed
The humble partner of his labors led.

The guests, whose weary limbs so lately press'd
The couch of sleep, felt less disposed to rest.
The damsel, too, still shudder'd at the tale;
Her eyes look'd wildly, and her cheeks were pale.
No more she sigh'd, no more she dropp'd a tear;
E'en love and grief awhile were lost in fear.
Horror and doubt her wavering soul confound;
Silence she dreads, yet starts at every sound:
In every corner spectres dire she sees,
And hears a ghost approach in every breeze.
Had Edwin's self with victory crown'd appear'd,
What most she loved on earth she most had fear'd.
The king in gayer words of comfort strove
To calm her spirits, and her fears remove.
"Since such," he said, "are the decrees of Heaven,
And on such hard conditions life is given,
That all of griefs and miseries have their share,
And those the least who most contented bear;
Hence, useless sorrow; let us bravely try
The frowns of adverse fortune to defy.
Just Heaven, perhaps, has blessings still in store;
And evils past may make us feel them more.
But while we wait for the still dead of night,
In silent safety to renew our flight,
Thy name and story briefly let me hear;
For once I knew proud Sarum's valiant peer;

And not thy words alone, but every grace
That decks thy form and animates thy face,
Proclaims the offspring of his noble race."

The maid replied, — " Since then my birth you know,
Short is the rest, a simple tale of woe.
My name is Ellen: in this province born,
Calm and retired hath been life's early morn;
Hid from the busy world I pass'd my days,
Alike unconscious of its blame or praise:
Tranquil at home, my sole ambition strove
To merit all I wish'd — my Edwin's love.
Perhaps, as Sarum's aged thane you knew,
You knew the youthful thane of Wardour too.
He was my Edwin: both together bred,
One matron nursed us, and one table fed.
A mother's place to each that nurse supplied,
For in our childhood both our mothers died.
Our hearts together early habits drew,
And tender love from faithful friendship grew.
The fatal morning of the dreadful fight
Beheld the holy priest our hands unite;
That instant to the field he hied away,
His country's dangers would not brook delay:
The patriot's virtues in his bosom glow,
He leaves his bride to meet the slaughterous foe.

"Thus doom'd from bliss, which seem'd secure, to part,
Ill-boding fears oppress'd my anxious heart;
With better hopes he went: my eyes I strain,
To trace his march along the distant plain—
He disappears: I seek the southern gate,
And there in trembling expectation wait;
In every murmuring gale still seem to hear
His steed's approach, and vainly think him near.
Fruitless were all my hopes, the lingering day
In tedious expectation pass'd away.
At length approach'd the horrors of the night,
When barbarous shouts and screams of wild affright,
In dreadful dissonance my ears assail,
And blazing turrets show the Danes prevail.
The castle falls: I fly, not knowing where,
By wild distraction driven and frantic fear:
Some straggling foes my wandering steps pursue,
And that I live, I owe to Heaven and you;
Though sad the boon, submissive to its will,
I grateful bow, its purpose to fulfill."
She ceased, and tears again began to flow:
The king partakes, but strives to soothe her woe;
He dried her tears, her trembling hand he press'd,
Her head unconscious dropp'd upon his breast:
Her open bosom, white as driven snow,
Heaved, as she sobb'd, its turgid orbs below;

By grief, despair and fear unnerved, her mind
To yielding softness all its power resign'd:
The strings of passion to each other move,
And grief, like pity, melts the soul to love.
She dreads the visions of the vacant night,
And begs the monarch to postpone his flight;
He hesitates: she lifts her humid eyes;
He meets their rays: his yielding look complies.
Age had not chill'd his blood, nor o'er his head
The hoary hue of rigid wisdom shed;
But health and manhood's undiminish'd grace
Moved in his limbs and sparkled in his face.
She blushes and looks down; then trembling sighs:
He press'd her hand, and with a sigh replies.
But hark! what sudden noise approaches near?
Close at the door the tread of horse they hear,
And sound of wheels; the door wide open flies,
And lo! a hoary figure meets their eyes.
Loose flow'd his beard, and loose his silvery hair:
Stern was his eye, commanding was his air;
Long were his sable robes; a sable wand
Directs his footsteps and supports his hand.
The damsel scream'd! the monarch with a bound
Snatch'd up his sword and buckler from the ground.
"And who art thou?" he cried; "what baleful shade
Thus dares our secret sorrows to invade?

Instant the cause of this intrusion tell,
Or hence, and mingle with the fiends of hell."
" Because thou know'st me not," replied the sage,
With looks undaunted, " I forgive thy rage;
But know that, if thou mean'st this land to free,
Thy best resources thou must learn from me;
Know too, that something more thy state requires,
Than idle dalliance and insane desires:
I own my king; confess thy lawful sway;
But kings must heaven-descended powers obey.
When time and place shall serve, I'll tell thee more:
Now haste away; my steeds are at the door.
Dare but in me awhile thy trust repose,
I'll lead thee safely through surrounding foes;
Secure direct thee to a safe retreat,
Where unperceived thy scatter'd friends may meet:
Collect their forces, and again maintain
An equal contest on th' embattled plain.
Propitious Heaven may then assistance send,
Or wavering fortune be once more thy friend."
As thus he spoke, his words the monarch weigh'd,
And with deep searching eye his face survey'd;
Then shortly pausing, — " Come, lead on," he cried;
" I'm now resolved: the rest let Heaven decide.
Whether thou mean'st to save or to betray,
Driven by despair I follow and obey.

Fortune like mine may every danger brave;
If still I sink, it must be in the grave.
But this poor orphan of a noble race,
Shall she be left to misery and disgrace?
No! if thou meanest well, some place provide,
Where she in safety may her sorrows hide."
" That I have done," the reverend sage replies:
" Near to our road a sacred convent lies;
There, in th' experienced abbess, shall she find
A faithful guardian and a parent kind."
Silent the maid assents:—with trembling awe,
In her preserver, now her king she saw;
With humble gratitude submissive bends,
And to his guardian care her fate commends.
They mount the ample car:—his sable wand
The wizard stretch'd:—the steeds obey his hand.
Through winding ways and trackless woods he drives,
Till at the convent's gate the car arrives;
The abbess to receive her charge attends,
The gate flies open, and the maid descends;
With quicken'd pace the steeds renew their flight,
And end their journey ere th' approach of light.
In those deep chasms, where Cheddar's limpid rills
Collected flow from Mendip's spacious hills;
Where rocks o'er rocks their whitening summits show,
And pendent mountains threat the vale below:

Beneath a beetling cliff, which high uprear'd
Its craggy brow, a spacious cave appear'd;
Of rude design, irregularly great,
It seem'd of savage beasts the wild retreat;
And long had been so: round its entrance grew
The sacred holly and funereal yew;
Untouch'd by man, aloft their branches spread,
And ever-during gloom around them shed;
On either side the clustering ivy clung
From crag to crag, and o'er the cavern hung.
Thither the sage, while distant yet the day,
Slow winding up the vale directs his way;
Then drives his chariot in. The king amazed,
At the wild solitary dwelling gazed.
Within more wide and vast the cavern grew,
And still increasing wonders rose to view.
Through long and spacious vaults they wind their way,
To where a lamp emits a glimmering ray.
There stops the car; the wizard slow descends;
The monarch follows, and his steps attends;
He opes the door; a sudden blaze of light
Bursts from within upon their dazzled sight.
Here in the rock a spacious hall they found
With native spars and crystals spangled round;
Unnumber'd lamps from vaulted roofs descend,
And all around their vivid light extend.

Celestial light, which purest ether feeds,
Whose flame no stench or smoky vapour breeds;
But ever clear emits its steady ray
In the full brightness of meridian day.
Vast and irregular the cave appear'd,
With glittering vaults on crystal columns rear'd;
And deep recesses winding from the sight,
Which hid their dark extremities in night.
Here a pure limpid fountain bubbling flows,
Then sinks into the rock from which it rose;
There bright stalactites from the roofs descend,
And varied crystals soft refractions blend.
The lights reflected on each other play,
In complex harmony serenely gay.
In one recess appear'd a frugal board,
With herbs, and fruits, and simple viands stored;
The sage conducts the monarch to his seat,
And begs him to partake the rustic treat.
"First," said th' astonish'd hero, "let me know,
What thou may'st be, and whence these wonders flow.
Have heavenly spirits chose thee for their friend,
And bid great Nature's laws before thee bend?
Or hast thou dared thy guilty soul to sell
To fiends accurs'd or ministers of hell?"
The sage benignant smil'd, and said, "Thy mind
In error's mazes wanders still confin'd.

Presumptuous man, in mockery of Heaven,
His vilest vices to his God hath given;
And seated on the pure etherial throne
A tyrant sway'd by passions like his own:
Whence rash Impiety hath dared to tell
Of wars in Heaven, of angels cast to Hell;
Of deadly hatred, and of mortal strife,
That dar'd approach th' Eternal Source of Life;
And fierce Rebellion, that, with spear and sword,
Assail'd great Nature's universal Lord.
"But henceforth learn, that though through boundless space
Unnumber'd spirits from Heaven their lineage trace
Though endless emanations ever flow,
Yet all alike their place and office know;
That all alike in different modes fulfil
Their Great Creator's universal will;
And act, as predisposed by general laws,
To one great end, from one efficient cause.
"Not he, the dreadful minister of death,
Who taints with plagues red Autumn's sultry breath;
Not he, who, from the rifted mountain pours
The flaming deluge that whole realms devours;
Not he, who lifts the waves, and guides the storms,
Th' Almighty's sovereign orders less performs.

Than he, who feeds the earth with vernal showers,
Matures her fruits, and scents her fragrant flowers.
Alone th' Eternal Universal Mind
Knows why to each his office is assign'd;
To His all perfect intellect alone
The purpose of each act is fully known;
By Him, but not by us, is understood
What partial ills are universal good;
What means incomprehensible may tend
Best to fulfill each necessary end.
" He, through the boundless void of time and space,
Assigns to each his period and his place;
Through worlds on worlds, his ministers attend,
Direct their progress, and assign their end.
In forms organic, elements condense,
And vital order through the whole dispense;
Bid generations from each other grow,
And life from death still renovated flow;
Yet, through each change of species, shape, and name,
Preserve primordial substances the same;
Obedient to the plastic power that guides
Each flux and reflux of th' eternal tides;
And, flowing still from one unvarying cause,
Through various agents, acts by various laws.
Endless divisions in succession flow,
And ranks from ranks still graduated grow.

" The first in place the orbs of heaven controul,
And worlds unnumber'd round their centres roll;
Attraction's chains from globe to globe extend,
Direct their progress, and their orbits bend;
Teach every planet its due course to run,
In measured periods, round its central sun;
The comet's more eccentric wanderings trace,
In mark'd progression, through the void of space;
Diffuse round all etherial floods of light
To fill the chasm of universal night;
From world to world the subtile streams extend,
And guide each ray to its predestin'd end;
Float in their currents, or more swift proceed,
And flame electric's coruscations lead.

" Others direct the waters where to flow,
And teach the winds from various points to blow;
Raise the full tides the moon's bright orb to meet,
Or bid them refluent in their shores retreat;
Exhale and spread them o'er each hill and plain,
In clouds collected, and dispersed in rain;
Or, solved in pure aërial vapour, strew
The spangled radiance of the morning dew;
Condense the storms, and bid the lightnings fly,
And roll the rattling thunders through the sky:
Now, in soft gales send forth the western breeze;
Now, in the blighting east the rivers freeze;

In northern blasts, o'er cloud-capt mountains blow
The fleecy covering of eternal snow.
Shoot winged meteors through the troubled air,
And, round the poles, bid lights nocturnal glare.
" Others, remote from Heaven's ethereal day,
Pervade the earth, and round its centre stray;
Impregn the rocks, and, in the hidden mine,
Enrich the ores, and bid the metals shine;
Collect in rills the subterranean waves,
And guide their bubbling streams through echoing caves;
Rich spars and crystals round their caverns spread,
And pave with gems the limpid current's bed.
Here they send forth salubrious rills to flow
From mossy cliffs, o'er fertile vales below;
And there in flaming streams, along the shore,
Consuming floods and molten torrents pour;
Shake earth's foundations, and, from gulfs beneath,
Mephitic blasts of deadly vapour breathe.
" Others the surface of the earth adorn,
Raise the tall tree, and spread the shaggy thorn;
Bid climbing creepers form the shady bower,
And breathe rich fragrance from the opening flower;
With luscious fruits autumnal branches bend,
And from untimely blights their growth defend;
With verdant herbage clothe the mountain's brow,
And bid rich harvests deck the vales below;

Spread vines on rocks, and, round the sterile shore
Of dry Arabia, spicy treasures pour.
" Others o'er different states and kingdoms reign,
And revolutions guide, or laws maintain;
Watch o'er their interests, and with patriot care
Partake their triumphs, their distresses share:
Now mild in peace, bid war and strife subside;
Now blow up discord, and to battle guide;
And, for wise purposes from us conceal'd,
Lead hostile armies to imbrue the field;
Or adverse chiefs in civil wars embroil,
To stain with native blood their native soil.
" Others the passions and affections guide,
O'er love, and hate, and jealousy preside;
Now groundless hopes and panic fears inspire,
Now dark distrust, and gleams of vain desire;
With fancied visions cheat the waking sight,
And scatter dreams and spectres through the night;
Imperfect spirits, who in part obey,
The frail and turbid passions which they sway:
For though thus sprung from God's all-perfect mind,
And first by Wisdom to their tasks assign'd;
Immerged in matter's dross, from strains impure,
Not e'en celestials can remain secure;
Toss'd in the troubles of this world, they find
Some earthly passions warp th' ethereal mind;

From kindred souls contagious frailties flow,
Mix with their natures, and to habits grow.
" For man, like them, his vital spirit draws,
From one Supreme and Universal Cause;
Like theirs, his reasoning soul from heaven descends,
And upward still, when freed from matter, tends.
But earthly passions, with narcotic force,
Enthrall it still, and drag it from its source;
Till clogg'd with vices, or in crimes imbrued,
Each native spring of virtue sinks subdued;
And thus corrupted, in some baser sphere,
Atones for all it did, or suffer'd here.
" Some ribb'd in ice, in torpid anguish lie,
Some toss'd in tempests round the horizon fly;
Others, in gulfs of subterraneous fire,
Purge off each sinful stain of foul desire,
Or, doom'd to transmigration, lost remain
From age to age, in servitude and pain;
Till call'd again in human forms to try,
If life renew'd new virtues can supply.
" Ferocious tyrants, thirsting still for blood,
To tigers turn'd, destroy mankind for food,
In wolves and foxes greedy statesmen prowl,
And venal senators in jackalls howl;
Smooth supple courtiers change alone their shapes,
To fawning spaniels turn'd, or grinning apes;

To beasts of burden, humbler drudges pass,
One sweats a pack-horse, and one toils an ass.
Gluttons and drunkards, wallowing in their wine,
Are scarcely alter'd when transform'd to swine;
And wily wantons, fitchews grown and stoats,
Still laugh at solemn lechers turn'd to goats;
While shrews indulge their cold malignant vice,
In cats domestic, torturing captive mice;
And slanderers, grimed in guilt of deeper dye,
Th' envenom'd tribe of reptile snakes supply;
In spiders, pettifoggers spread the snare,
Where captive flies their clients' fortunes share;
Alike obdurate knaves, and stubborn fools,
Martyrs and persecutors meet in mules;
Avarice, Ambition's bastard child, alone,
Nor beasts, nor birds, nor even reptiles own,
But, doom'd from heaven's all-cheering light to fly,
In frozen solitude its votaries lie;
Till slow revolving ages mark the date
Prescribed for each probationary state;
When freed again bright emanations rise,
And each again its native virtue tries.
" Thus endless generations come and go,
As wave on wave the ocean's waters flow;
While each, that breaks on Lethe's shore, supplies
The refluent substance from which others rise.

Each winged hour that wafts the day and night,
Some weep life's coming, others mourn its flight:
In pain and sorrow it begins and ends,
Through pain and sorrow to oblivion tends;
While transient intervals of bliss sustain
The links renew'd, that still prolong the chain: —
Great Nature's chain, which through all worlds extends,
And plastic mind with pliant matter blends;
Immortal both, the matter and the mind,
Though both alike in mortal forms combined.
Through everlasting time and boundless space,
Their endless circuits, transmigrations trace;
While still through all, one universal Cause
Extends immutable its equal laws;
And worlds unnumber'd still those laws obey,
Here rise renew'd, there perish in decay;
While revolution's changes but maintain
The general unity of order's reign;
And varied but in colour, form, and name,
Th' eternal substance ever is the same.
" This throne of Nature — this all-teeming earth,
Which heirs to heaven supplies from mortal birth,
Shall, sunk into a torpid mass, decay,
Or, shiver'd into atoms, pass away,
Through boundless space to wander unconfined,
Till new attractions to new centres bind;

And in new order teach their course to run,
In other orbits, round another sun.
Whether benumbing frosts extend their reign
From round the poles, and more and more obtain;
Or gradually absorb'd, the waters sink,
As central caves circumfluent moisture drink,
Or into floating dust and vapour hurl'd,
Its own combustions decompose the world;
Whate'er hath a beginning still must tend,
By its inherent nature, to its end;
Must still to new created forms supply,
Eternal matter for mortality:
Alone the source from which creation flows,
No change, nor end, as no beginning knows.
" But as pure spirits may their natures blend
With human frailties, and to vice descend;
So man, by adverse Virtue's aid, may rise
To commune with the missives of the skies;
May learn to lift his intellectual soul
Above the body's dark inert controul;
With spirits of inferior orders join,
And doubtfully partake their powers divine;
Their intellectual intercourse enjoy,
And, as th' Almighty wills, their aid employ.
" Hence, what thy doubt and wonder here excites,
These splendid caves and supernatural lights,

These subterraneous domes and vaulted halls,
These spangled pillars and incrusted walls;
Are all the boon which, in its bounty, Heaven
Hath to a life of studious labour given;
The work of spirits, who have deign'd to join
Their own exalted faculties to mine;
And let a mortal guide them to fulfill
The sovereign purpose of th' Almighty will.
" Of them I learn, that from this fatal night,
Our country's guardian spirits may unite;
That, long distracted by divided sway,
One general interest they may now obey.
And bid once more concordant empire smile
Its peaceful blessings o'er this sacred isle.
" But now we need refreshment and repose;
When morn returns I will the rest disclose:
Now freely share, what to my frugal board
Our trees indigenous and herbs afford."
Thus spoke the sage; the monarch, while he heard,
Wrapt in reflection and deep thought appear'd;
Then thus replied: " Well have thy words removed
The labouring doubts which long my soul hath proved.
Heaven's awful justice now at length I see,
Dispensed by wisdom and benignity;
Whence on my cause with firmness I rely,
To reign with glory, or with honour die!

For each event prepare alike my breast,
Convinced what Heaven ordains will be the best."
This said, he sate, and with the wizard shared
The simple supper Nature's self prepared;
Then each, in separate cells, to sleep resign'd
His weary limbs, on a hard mat reclined.
Though, in these caves profound, no orient ray
Or fading stars proclaim th' approach of day,
The sage correctly counts the measured hours,
When cheerful morn returns, or evening lours.
Hence, with the rising sun, again he rose,
And waked the monarch from his short repose.
" Full well thou know'st," he cried, " that not alone
The Danish force our country hath o'erthrown;
But that, distracted by divided sway,
Through our own faults we are become their prey.
Then, ere again thou darest the chance of fight,
Our hearts and interests thou must firm unite;
By patient skill and mild persuasion try,
The bands of concord through the land to tie.
" Here then lay by awhile thy sword and shield,
And learn once more the arms of peace to wield.
Thee Poetry's and Music's charms inspire;
Lightly thy fingers touch the sounding lyre;
Spirits of harmony have tuned thy tongue
With all the magic melody of song,

And bright Invention in its music pours
The force of Reason deck'd in Fancy's flowers.
How oft, ere yet by regal cares oppress'd,
Thy harp hath soothed the troubles of thy breast!
How oft, on silvery Thames's shady side,
Its soft vibrations echo'd o'er the tide;
While resting on his oar the boatman hung,
And bless'd the accents of thy tuneful tongue!"

"Ah! happy days, long past!" the monarch cries,
While starting tears stood trembling in his eyes;
"How blest had life's uncounted minutes flown,
Had I no other cares or fortunes known;
But still my brothers lived to guard the land,
And bear the toils and splendors of command!"

"Clothed in this minstrel's garb," the sage pursued,
"Safely thou may'st the prowling foe elude;
From this good harp secure protection find,
Since poets are the friends of all mankind:
Nor shall the rudest robber dare refuse,
Grateful attention to the peaceful Muse.
Guided by her, thou may'st unquestion'd go
Through Danish camps, and face, unarm'd, the foe;
Bid hostile chiefs their guarded gates unbar,
And lull awhile the dissonance of war."

The counsel pleased the king; the harp he strung,
And tuned its notes; then o'er his shoulders hung.

A minstrel's robes his manly limbs invest;
His curling hair a circling fillet prest:
He thank'd his host; then, through the darksome way,
Revisited the cheering realms of day.

BOOK THE THIRD.

IMMORTAL parent of each liberal art,
That brightens reason, or expands the heart;—
Sweet Poetry! that once, with Wisdom join'd,
Couldst move the passions, and yet feed the mind;
Of pure and intellectual forms couldst raise
The only edifice which ne'er decays:
Mocking each prodigy of wealth and power,
The broad-based pyramid and cloud-capp'd tower,
Which time shall to their elements restore,
In shapeless masses on th' encumber'd shore;
While unimpair'd thy prouder structures stand,
Th' applause of unborn nations to command:
Ah! still benignant smile, and deign to save
The lamp that lights me cheerly to the grave!
One last bright glimmer let it now supply,
Then sudden sink, and in that glimmer die!
Though more than seventy winters' frost hath shed
Its withering blights upon my hoary head;
Though, slowly lingering through half empty veins,
My heart's cold current scarce its pulse maintains;

Still Memory rouses Fancy's drooping fires,
And transient gleams of youthful glow inspires;
Which mellow'd in the calm of life's decline,
Autumnal twilight's various hues combine,
And still with clear but fading lustre shine.

Though fall'n on evil tongues and evil days,
When noisy nonsense wins both wealth and praise;
And crowds, perplex'd in smoke they take for fire,
What nature most disowns still most admire;
While each dark phantom, sprung from feverish dreams,
The true sublime of genuine genius seems;
Still Hope smiles gaily on the bold design,
Which Truth and Nature would with Fiction join;
Through Fancy's prism exhibit Reason's light,
And trace each color in refraction bright
With every shade by adverse passion thrown,
Which Virtue blames, but Nature still must own.

Though awe and conscious weakness bid me dread,
With tottering limbs, Mæonian steps to tread;
Or vainly toil to reach the tone sublime
Of Grecian melody in jingling rhyme;
A toil as vain as of the basest stone
To form a Jove, or build a Parthenon:
Yet various ways, the various muses show,
As various streams from vast Parnassus flow.

Who seek their loftiest source, must scale each steep.
With giant strides, and fathom every deep;
While those, who from their humbler rivulets sip,
May lightly through each winding valley trip:
One goddess now, with wanton wiles pursue;
And now, with serious air, another woo;
Like Sulmo's or Ferrara's bard, unite
The grave, the gay, the solid, and the light;
Here march with epic strides, and, firm and strong,
Display the loftiest energies of song;
And there, in frolicsome description, dance
Through all the wanton windings of romance;
With taste from ROGERS, polish and refine
Such ores as glow in CRABBE's exhaustless mine;
And BYRON's vigor temper with such art,
That judgment sanction all that moves the heart.
Such let me follow; and with varied strain,
Now sink with grace to rise with grace again;
Through Love's and War's perplex'd meanders flow,
Elate, not turgid — simple, but not low;
Join strength with neatness, dignity with ease,
And artless seem with every art to please;
Delusive still, through Fancy's labyrinths stray,
Yet only go where Nature points the way:
While Truth, half hidden, half embellish'd, lies,
And Wisdom smiles through Folly's gay disguise.

But hence each trick that would conceal defect,
In words disused, or darksome dialect;
Means ever prompt each limping line to botch
With CHAUCER's Norman or with DOUGLAS' Scotch.
Whate'er the character, or prose or rhyme,
Still let it be the language of the time;
Whose brightest polish bears no trace of art,
But seems to flow spontaneous from the heart.
Such strains the bards of happier ages sung;
To such his harp the minstrel monarch strung,
As, issuing from the gloomy caves of night,
He hail'd again the rising orb of light;
Which, just emerged above the mountain's brow,
Shot gleams oblique along the vale below.
" Hail, sacred source! whose pure ethereal rays,
Diffusing life, o'er distant planets blaze!
And you, ye spirits, who the sunbeams guide,
Through empty space, and in their currents ride;
If still to you the powers divine belong,
Of breathing melody and sacred song;
If e'er in early youth my soul ye fired,
Tuned my wild accents, and my voice inspired:
When idly gay, luxuriant Fancy strove
To deck my brows with roseate wreaths of love!
Ah! now with favor hear my juster vow,
And strong persuasion on my lips bestow;

Breathe patriot virtues in the strains I sing,
And sound my country's cause in every string."
He said, and down the winding vale below,
Follow'd the rivulets which collected flow;
While from their founts aërial mists exhale,
And round the rocks in clouds transparent sail;
Till scatter'd by the sun they melt away,
Sunk in the hazy softness of the day;
And tinge the distant landscape in the hues
Of orient pearls, dissolved in radiant dews.
Enraptured with the scene, awhile he stood;
Then down the vale his destined way pursued,
Resolved to seek the Severn's distant shore,
And Cambria's hills, and Mercia's plains explore;
Where lazy Ceulf held his doubtful reign,
A titled slave dependent on the Dane;
While aged Buthred from the throne had fled,
And 'mid the mountains hid his hoary head:
Where fame reports, that, needy and unknown,
He roams, by all neglected and alone;
Except an only daughter's pious care,
The only child now left his griefs to share.
But dark conspiracies and smother'd hate
In secret shake the vile usurper's state;
And every haughty discontented thane,
Scorns the mean minion of the tyrant Dane.

By the smooth current of the limpid brook,
His devious way the minstrel monarch took,
To where the Severn meets the rising main,
And, with alternate floods, o'erwhelms the plain.
Oft as the moon exalts the buoyant waves,
Each refluent stream the spacious pastures laves;
But, oft as ocean's waters back subside,
Deep yawning gulphs the vast lagunes divide,
And scatter'd isles with shores ambiguous stand,
Amidst the watery wastes of mud and sand.
There, as he mused, a fisher's boat he spied,
Swiftly approaching with the rising tide:
The master undertakes to waft him o'er
To where in view appear'd the Cambrian shore.
He mounts the fragile bark; the boatman veers
The yielding rudder, and obliquely steers;
Then plies his oars, and hoists his spreading sail,
Which gently swells before the southern gale.
Lightly the vessel cuts the liquid tide,
The whitening waves before the prow divide;
Around the sides the sparkling bubbles play,
Dance in the sun, and mark the trackless way.
They pass the Holme's steep rock; the Cambrian sands
Appear; the vessel strikes — the monarch lands —
Then marches on along the fertile shores,
Where Uske his tributary waters pours,

Till, mingled with the Severn's mightier tide,
Unnoticed and unknown its currents glide.
Along the shore he march'd, until the sun
His daily progress through the skies had run,
And o'er the mountain tops, with feeble ray,
Just show'd the fading glories of the day;
While slowly twilight spread its tender hues,
Sunk in soft shadows cool'd with fresh'ning dews.
And now the monarch look'd around to find
The lowly dwelling of some humble hind;
Some friendly cot, or hospitable shed,
Where safe awhile he might repose his head.
Beneath a rock, amid some tufted trees,
At length a solitary cot he sees;
And hark! as now the path conducts him near,
Sweet music gently vibrates on his ear.
A damsel's voice it seems, who, while she sings,
With skilful fingers strikes the accordant strings;
Amazed he hears the language and the tone,
For both were Saxon, and the words his own;—
Words which, when blithe in youth his harp he strung,
Amid the smiles of peace, he oft had sung.
Near and more near, with silent steps he drew,
Till through the trees the warbler met his view:
Close by the cot, beneath the mingled shade,
Of vines and woodbines, sat a lovely maid;

A peasant's humble weeds her form invest,
But princely dignity her mien exprest;
Though coarse and simple, neat was her attire;
With taste her flying fingers touch'd the lyre;
Exalted sentiment, and native grace,
Beam'd in each feature of her beauteous face;
Her head a simple fillet loosely bound,
Her curling tresses wildly wanton'd round,
In auburn ringlets on her shoulders play'd,
Or heedless o'er her snowy bosom stray'd.
Serenely melancholy flow'd the song,
The echoing rocks each plaintive note prolong;
Whose sweetly-lingering cadence seem'd t' invite,
The slow descending silence of the night.
Hid in the covert of the adjoining wood,
Enraptured and amazed the monarch stood;
And, as her beauteous face he oft reviews,
Memory her image in his mind renews:
He thought, in happier days, he had somewhere seen
Those lovely features, and that graceful mien;
He thought he had somewhere heard that tuneful tongue,
Chaunt in less plaintive mood the tender song;
Yet still no certain image thought supplies,
But doubts on doubts, in vague conjectures rise;
Unceasing wars and troubles had effaced
Each mild impression happier scenes had traced.

Perplex'd, he stands, and listens to the sound,
Then tunes his harp, and rests it on the ground;
Strikes, with a master's hand, the trembling strings,
And bids them vibrate to the notes she sings.
Sudden she rose, and moving toward the trees,
The royal minstrel's form majestic sees;
Silent she stops, entranced in wild surprize,
Pale grew her cheeks, amazement fix'd her eyes.
"What awful vision, — what delusive shade,"
At length she cried, "thus haunts this secret glade?
Yet should I know the features of that face,
Its dignity benign — its manly grace;
That form before hath to my eyes appear'd,
Those notes before, in happier days, I've heard.
Say, do I wake? or do my senses stray,
Of long calamity and grief the prey?
No! thou art Alfred, or some fleeting shade
Comes in those lineaments divine array'd;
Some sainted spirit from yon azure skies,
To charm my ears and fascinate my eyes."
"Thou too," the king replies, "hast felt the frown
Of adverse fate, and better days hast known;
Thy mien, thy accent, and thy looks reveal,
What this coarse garb and humble roof conceal.
Where have I seen that beauteous face before?
Where have I heard that voice its music pour?

Ah! now I know; each grace, each charm renews
Remembrance past, and Mercia's princess shews.
Has then the storm, which o'er our country pours
Its wasteful torrents, and each realm devours,
E'en on Elsintha's unresisting head
Its fierce inevitable fury sped?
Ah! say, what brought thee to this low retreat?—
How didst thou fly from Mercia's distant seat?
Where are thy father and thy brother fled?
Ah! why those tears?—alas! then are they dead?"
"They both are dead," the sorrowing maid replies,
While pious tears fast trickled from her eyes.
"Both are released from this sad world of woe,
Nor more its transitory evils know.
I—only I—of Mercia's race am left,
An exiled orphan, of each friend bereft.
Long is the dismal tale: but since the day
Now faintly sheds its last departing ray,
Here in this shelter'd cot thou mayst repose,
And hear the story of Elsintha's woes.
Here, unmolested and unknown, I share
The gains and labours of an aged pair;
Who, with the balm of mild parental love,
To soothe and heal my sorrows long have strove;
Who, sprung from Saxon blood, like us have known,
Domestic griefs and miseries of their own;

And learn'd each gentle sympathy to blend,
Of parent, guardian, comforter, and friend.
" Amid the tempests that now rage around,
The exile here hath still a shelter found;
Hath freely shared whate'er our frugal board
And humble roof could to his wants afford:
Here then, beneath this high-embowering vine,
On this low seat, thy weary limbs recline;
And, if thou wishest my sad tale to learn,
Attend, and listen till our host's return;
Whom now the harvest's annual toils detain
Till night's late hour, on yonder distant plain."
Obedient to her words, the godlike man
Sat by her side, when thus the maid began:
" Perhaps thou hast not yet forgot the day,
When from the Mercian court thou went'st away;
When all thy hopes of promised succour fail'd,
And hostile counsels o'er my sire prevail'd;
Thence is the date of all our house's woe,
Thence all our sorrows and misfortunes flow.
My aged father then was doom'd to prove
The fatal folly of untimely love;
And, by delusive charms seduced, he led
A youthful damsel to his widow'd bed;
A youthful damsel skill'd in every art,
To blind his judgment, and pervert his heart.

By nature form'd to fascinate and please;
Or, as she chose, to plague, torment, and tease.
Too soon his unresisting age she sway'd,
And all the realm her wanton will obey'd.
" Jealous and watchful, she surrounds the throne
With servile tools and minions of her own;
A greedy, insolent, and venal train,
Whom public waste and private spoil maintain;
The flies and canker-worms of morbid power,
Who the weak plant, that gives the birth, devour.
Each ancient friend, whose faith long tried she knew,
She charged with crimes, and banish'd from his view;
Against his children equal arts employ'd,
And all the parent's tender love destroy'd;
With dark suspicions sour'd his doating mind,
Now weak with age, and with affection blind.
" 'Mid court intrigues and jarring factions bred,
She knew each art by which mankind is led;
And that more empire woman's vices gain,
O'er feeble hearts, than virtues e'er obtain.
Dead lies the lake till ruffled by the breeze,
And slightest frosts its stagnant shallows freeze;
The gale, which stirs the tree's deep earth-bound root,
But makes its branches more luxuriant shoot;
And transient storms, which care-bound bosoms shake,
But serve affection's dormant glow to wake.

The ready tear, the counterfeited sigh,
Reluctance feign'd with 'vantage to comply;
That generous modesty, which nought will take,
Excepting all, and that for his dear sake;
The playful frolic, studied to beguile;
The frown that seasons the returning smile;
With all the little wanton arts to tease,
Yet make vexation, soon as over, please;
Ne'er can the honor of the faithful friend,
Or virtuous wife, to practise condescend.
Yet 'tis by arts like these that women rule,
And make e'en Worth and Wisdom play the fool.
By these enthrall'd, my noble father's mind,
Dominion, honor, children — all resign'd;
Content, if smiles but deck'd the wanton's face,
To sink all else in ruin and disgrace.

" With filial piety, my brother strove,
By still deserving, to regain his love;
But still th' enchantress' arts despotic reign,
His filial piety still strove in vain;
Cold diffidence my father's heart enclosed,
And 'gainst his only son its shield opposed.

" The venal tribe, whom public plunder feeds,
Ceulf, the queen's unworthy favorite, leads;
Mark'd with each vice's opposite abuse;
Idle, yet busy; greedy, yet profuse;

A haughty tyrant, an obedient slave
In action timid, and in counsel brave;
Eager to gain, unskilful to employ;
And ever grasping, never to enjoy.
Endow'd by Nature with a form to please,
His graceful mien join'd elegance with ease;
And, skill'd in empty jests, he knew each art
That wins the thoughtless head and careless heart;
For camps and senates equally unfit,
He scoff'd at blockheads, and so seem'd a wit.
Even his levity possess'd a charm
To lull whate'er could jealousy alarm,
And fit him for a safe convenient tool,
Whom she securely might employ and rule;
Nor dread th' ambition of a mind so low,
To grasp at power she wish'd not to bestow;
Though now 'tis said, that, mortified and grieved,
She since hath found her guilty hopes deceived;
And that this favorite, whom she meant to sway,
Thinks it a woman's duty to obey;
For frothy vanity, with food supplied,
Is often pamper'd into bloated pride.
" When raised thus high, ambitious projects fire
His restless thoughts, and treasons foul inspire;
He sees within his reach the regal crown,
And Mercia's realm prepared his power to own;

He sees the queen, by lawless passion led,
Ready to share his fortunes and his bed.
The sceptre trembles in my father's hands,
His throne upon the brink of ruin stands;
But still his son, in strength and years mature,
Seem'd placed by Heaven his safety to secure;
Whence by each wily artifice they strove,
This firm and faithful bulwark to remove;
And by foul means their fouler ends to gain,
Became the servile vassals of the Dane;
With foreign force domestic fraud supplied,
And every sacred law and right defied.
" At length my brother's indignation rose;
He sees his country yielded to her foes;
He sees her honor and her welfare sold,
And Mercian treason paid with Mercian gold!
He sees his father's danger and disgrace,
And dreads th' impending ruin of his race.
Throughout the realm he spreads the loud alarm,
And bids the thanes against the traitors arm;
Their jarring interests in one cause unites,
To guard their monarch's and their country's rights.
" The queen, affrighted, sees the tempest rise,
And all her arts to stay its fury tries;
Dismisses Ceulf, and repentance feigns,
Extortion checks, and lawless power restrains;

To change the system of her rule pretends,
And courts again the king's discarded friends.
With graceful dignity, or winning smiles,
Awes and imposes, flatters and beguiles;
Laments the wrongs and sufferings of the thanes,
And vows abhorrence for the usurping Danes;
Protests, the terror of their arms alone
Had forced the king their hateful power to own;
And, if his valiant subjects dare unite,
In arms, to vindicate their country's right,
The prince himself shall lead them to the fight.
" My brother, open, generous, and sincere,
Alike a stranger to deceit and fear;
Too rashly credulous, at once resign'd
The sounder judgment of his noble mind;
And won by faithless promises and smiles,
Perish'd a victim to her treacherous wiles.
" Yes, ever loved and ever honor'd shade,
'Twas thy own virtue, that thy soul betray'd;
Thy pure sincerity, that ne'er deceived,
Too boldly trusted, and too soon believed.
How shall my tongue the dreadful tale relate,
How show th' untimely horrors of thy fate?
" Late on the evening of a summer's day,
When glimmering twilight shed its parting ray;

A favorite of the queen, an artful dame,
Alone and secret to my brother came.
" 'Fair Ethelinde,' she said, 'our virtuous queen,
Hath long young Alfgar's worth and wisdom seen, —
Hath long regretted that a jealous reign
Should render all that worth and wisdom vain;
Nor call'd to share the honors of his race,
One form'd by Heaven each dignity to grace:
But brooding jealousies and groundless fears
Are still the vices of declining years.
Happy at length, her faith and zeal to prove,
She'll now restore him to his father's love,
And ending all suspicion or offence,
Unite them in their country's just defence.
Then soon as night's dark shades their veil extend,
Alone and secret at the court attend;
There, in the queen's apartment, shalt thou find,
A patriot monarch, and a parent kind;
There find the council sitting in debate,
On the best means to save this tottering state;
Whether with Alfred in the war to join,
And Mercia's arms to thy command resign;
Or with inglorious gifts once more to gain
The dangerous friendship of the powerful Dane.'
" Filial and patriot virtues roused, unite
To swell my brother's hopes, and blind his sight.

Unguarded, at th' appointed hour he goes,
But finds the palace sunk in dead repose;
Through various rooms the guide his footsteps led,
Till in the last appear'd a stately bed;
Then back, as if with sudden fright, she springs,
Instant the closing door behind her swings,
The bolt recoils, and in the mortice rings.

" Thus left alone, amazed he looks around,
While doubts and fears his wavering soul confound;
A single lamp, that glimmer'd through the room,
Just served to shew its solitary gloom;
The silken curtains which the bed enclose,
Seem'd drawn to guard some slumberer's safe repose.
Backward he creeps with slow and silent tread,
When, lo! a woman starting lifts her head;
Looks through the curtains, and with feign'd surprise,
And screams of horror, for assistance cries!
It was the queen!—instant her guards appear,
Ready prepared in secret ambush near;
Some seize their victim, others haste to bring,
From an adjoining room, the wretched king.
In haste she urged the helpless captive's fate,
The murderous guards the order scarcely wait;
Their captain, Oswald, lifts the deadly dart,
The glittering point is plunged into his heart;

Convulsed in death's last agonies he lies,
A bleeding corpse before his father's eyes.
" Thus did she force my miserable sire,
By traitors' hands, to see his son expire;
With direst guilt, his life's last scene to stain,
And add remorse to feebleness and pain.
She ne'er had child or brother; never felt
Her heart with sympathies of nature melt;
No parents' tenderness, or sisters' love,
To mitigate inherent vices strove;
But left a spurious orphan from her birth,
Cut off from all, an alien on the earth;
Concentrated in self, as interest sways,
Or baser appetite, her soul obeys;
With art consummate, to its object tends,
Wise in the means, but foolish in the ends.
" My brother gone, nor fear nor shame remains,
Her fell desires she now no more restrains;
Ceulf returns with all his venal crew,
And unopposed their traitorous schemes pursue;
Against my father all their force combines;
Deposed in fact, the king in form resigns;
'Mid foreign guards, dependent on the Dane,
The base usurpers tributary reign.
" The fallen king a prison's walls confine;
In separate cells, we there together pine;

Within his own strong castle's lofty keep,
By moats surrounded and a river deep;
And still to aggravate our hopeless woe,
Guarded by Oswald, our inhuman foe;
Who, while the son's warm blood yet stains his hands,
The father's and the sister's fate commands.
" There pent in silent solitude forlorn,
I watch the night, yet dread the lingering morn—
The lingering morn, which only mocks the sight,
Through grated bars, with dim ambiguous light;
And wakes to misery one sense the more,
To view each horror, only felt before;
While thought perplex'd but aggravates despair,
And lays each suffering nerve of anguish bare.
" Oh! could unfeeling power but learn how slow
The lonely captive's languid minutes flow;
How sad it is from day to day to find,
One dark and dreary blank enclose the mind;
Nought felt of life but misery and pain,
Nought heard but sighs, for ever breathed in vain;
In mercy might it bid the wretch expire,
In all the agonies of racks and fire;
In mercy grant such tortures as ensure,
E'en in their own excess, a speedy cure;
Rather than weary suffering, yet deny,
Unstain'd with guilt, the privilege to die.

" How oft, when sorrow brooded o'er despair,
I pray'd that Heaven might self-destruction spare;
And e'en, perhaps, its justice had defied,
Had hell the means of instant death supplied:
For, in the body's narrow cell confined,
Each virtue droops, as morbid grows the mind,
And moody madness brings its sad relief,
When wearied nature sinks subdued by grief.
" But wrongs still baser was I doom'd to prove:
The villain dared insult me with his love;
Dared bid me with his brutal lusts comply,
Or, bound myself, behold my father die!
That hitherto by his indulgence spared
Had been the fetters for my limbs prepared;
But life was pledged my person to secure,
I must be grateful, or must worse endure;
The means were left to him, though clear exprest,
That still the safest means would be the best;
And I, who knew his masters, also knew
Much anger would not from my death ensue;
That hints were dropp'd; but still his love for me,
Both child and parent saved from fetters free;
But still my prudence must be well aware,
That love in power can no denial bear;
And power he had, which I could not oppose,
To guard, confine, and treat me as he chose;

He wish'd to be effectually my friend,
But still on terms on which he could depend;
And, if he found me tractable and kind,
E'en more than mere indulgence I might find.
" In short, his lust was but ambition's tool,
And I of both was to be made the fool.
The last sad relic of the royal race,
Bedaub'd with vice, and abject in disgrace,
Might lend to others her polluted name,
Yet nothing for herself presume to claim;
While every bulwark of respect o'erthrown,
A prize for open contest left the crown;
And he, who held the heiress in his power,
Might take her specious title as a dower;
Yet keep her, thus degraded and forlorn,
A gaudy puppet for reproach and scorn.
" All-gracious Heaven, that saw'st me sunk so low,
Still to thy guardian mercies let me bow!
Still bend with gratitude before thy throne,
For patience, strength, and courage not my own!
Inspired by thee, my proud indignant soul,
Thus wrong'd, its rising fury could control;
Could meet the villain's insults with a smile,
And vice's arts, with its own lures, beguile:
Yes: with gay looks and pleasure's wanton air,
I bade him for the festive hour prepare;

Fill high with sparkling wine the copious bowl,
And yield to mirth and revelry his soul;
But grant, meanwhile, what woman's charms require,
The bath, the toilet, and more fit attire;
And then, when wish'd for, either come or send, —
The summons readily I should attend;
Yet hoped, a virgin's blush to spare, that night
Might veil in secrecy the new delight;
When my unworthy person he should find,
Without condition, cheerfully resign'd.

" All was conceded, while in smiles I tried
Th' abhorrent shuddering of my soul to hide:
But buoyant in distress my spirits rose,
With art to shun what strength could not oppose;
And, mistress of myself, the dangers foil,
By making guilt upon itself recoil.
Firm was my step, when I at night was led
To share his table first, and then his bed;
My looks were diffident, but yet sedate;
No tears I shed, nor yet appear'd elate:
With seeming negligence my form array'd,
What modesty allow'd with grace display'd.
The only way to lull was to allure,
And yielding trifles, all the rest secure.

" Amidst my raiment was a drug I knew,
And with me took, but kept conceal'd from view.

The couch prepared, the table spread I found,
And the bright bowl with generous liquor crown'd.
" Silent before him, as he sate, I stood,
While smother'd thoughts o'er indignation brood;
Which, spite of all endeavours to suppress,
My glowing cheeks and flashing eyes confess;
But pleased he takes my silence for assent,
And thinks my blushes something milder meant.
Then while his lips upon one hand were fix'd,
The other in his bowl th' ingredient mix'd;
And pleased I saw it, through the lucid glass,
Slowly dissolve and mingle with the mass.
He sought my lips, but those I still refused,
And blushing begg'd to be awhile excused;
Till conversation with refreshment join'd,
Might soothe my spirits, and compose my mind;
And friendly intimacy first remove
My virgin modesty, and lead to love;
When unreserved caresses should repay
The boon, and bliss be sweeten'd by delay.
With glee he smiled, and kiss'd my hand again,
Which still I let him unopposed retain;
Striving meanwhile my spirits to collect,
And equal mirth with shuddering heart affect.
Cup after cup I pledge, and make him think
That, while I only kiss the brim, I drink;

Then, as he urgent grows, with blushes pray,
And yielding smiles, a little more delay;
And prattling on with counterfeited glee,
Mask'd deep designs in playful revelry:
For, much as pride and virtue shrunk from vice,
A father's perils hush'd all scruples nice;
Nor could I feel less anxious for my own,
Which were not limited to death alone;
But dire indignities, of which to think,
Made every thrilling nerve with horror shrink,
Await my failure: in a cell confined;
To all a monster's brutal lusts resigned;
His foul desires would be indulged with spite,
And cruelty enhance each fell delight.

" Such were my fears:—with dalliance and address,
I therefore trifle, and the liquor press,
In which alone I trusted for success:
And soon I found my trust was not in vain,—
His faltering tongue betrays his addled brain.
He nods and hiccups, then with stupid stare,
And drivelling lip, bids me for bed prepare;
But rising, staggers, reels, and falling lies,
Stretch'd on the couch till slumber seals his eyes.

" Near to his head his glittering sword was laid,
Eager I seized it, and unsheath'd the blade.

But, as the crisis of my fate drew near,
My woman's heart felt all a woman's fear,
And woman's softness too; abhorring blood,
Long unresolved and motionless I stood.
If left alive, he quickly might awake,
And then what dreadful vengeance would he take!
My helpless father butcher'd in his age —
Myself the victim both of lust and rage!
Each satiated by turns, and each employ'd
To whet the other's appetite when cloy'd.
Strong was the opiate, but I was not sure
That long its drowsy influence would endure;
To death alone I could with safety trust,
And death was due, the punishment was just.
But was it mine to punish? whence the right,
To speed the soul thus unprepared for flight;
Preclude repentance, and of all bereave,
That hope in heaven might yet to mercy leave?
For transient sin inflict eternal pain,
And make redemption, in one instance, vain;
The thought was horrible, my wilder'd mind,
To doubts distracting all its power resign'd;
Losing occasion, won with so much pain,
And which, once lost, could ne'er be won again.
I raise my hand, but guiltless still it falls,
And conscience every energy enthralls.

When lo! all pale, and smear'd with clotted blood,
Close by the couch my brother's image stood;
His hand seem'd pointed to his murderer's breast,
Revenge and death his haggard looks express'd.
My trembling heart, the dreadful spectre fires,
Braces each nerve, and all my soul inspires;
Terror and pride unwonted strength impart, —
I raised the steel, and plunged it in his heart!
In purple torrents gush'd life's ebbing tide —
He groan'd! he gasp'd! he gnash'd his teeth, and died!
" The deed thus done, a sudden horror stole
O'er my chill'd sense, and numb'd my shuddering soul;
Where'er I turn, pale spectres glare around,
And through the vaults hoarse voices seem to sound.
I pause awhile, till calmer thoughts renew
Their steady light, and real dangers shew;
Bid me that instant from these dangers fly,
Or meet my fate and resolutely die.
" Near to the couch dead Oswald's armour lies;
' This,' I exclaim, ' affords a safe disguise.'
In haste I throw my woman's dress aside,
The plumed helm my tresses serves to hide;
The spangled hauberk glitters on my breast,
And scales of jointed steel my limbs invest;
My trembling hands the deadly faulchion wield,
And o'er my shoulders hang th' embossed shield.

" In this disguise my father's cell I sought,
And told the daring deed my arm had wrought;
Bade him that instant with his daughter fly,
Or wait to see her on a scaffold die!
By suffering weaken'd, and by wrongs subdued,
Long unresolved my trembling father stood;
Till urged and press'd, he bade me lead the way,
Go where I would, he'd follow and obey.
O'er his shrunk limbs a soldier's cloak I spread,
A tatter'd cowl conceals his hoary head;
Through the dim vaults, with trembling steps we go,
The guards their captain's glittering armour know;
Each nod or signal of my hand obey,
Unbar the doors, and ope the dreary way.
At length we feel the freshening breeze of night,
And view the silver moon's refulgent light,
Which o'er the wandering Wye's pellucid streams,
Spreads the soft radiance of its quivering beams.
" There lightly floating on the rippling tide,
Close to the bank, a fisher's skiff we spied;
In haste we board, and push it from the shore,
And ply, with weak unskilful hands, the oar;
Observant of the shoals, the rudder guide,
And down the rapid current swiftly glide.
Some power divine, some more than mortal force
Accelerates our speed, and wings our course.

Swift as we pass, each winding shore recedes,
Back fly the woods and dew-bespangled meads.
Scarce had the morning sun illumed the skies,
When near we saw the Cambrian mountains rise;
With joy we hail the hospitable shore,
Quit the frail bark, and Heaven's just Lord adore;
Who thus, through wonderous ways, had deign'd to save
Our forfeit lives, and snatch us from the grave.

" As weary here we rested on the ground,
A sum of gold in Oswald's belt I found,
Which soon a guide and two good steeds obtains,
To bear us to the court where Mervin reigns;
The Cambrian Mervin, Mercia's old ally,
Whose friendship now some succour might supply.

" But, long to sorrow and remorse a prey,
Too fast my father felt his strength decay;
Unable to proceed, we here reposed,
Here the sad scene of his long sufferings closed;
Here death, disarm'd of terrors, mildly shed
Oblivious slumbers on his drooping head;
By hard ingratitude and wrongs oppress'd,
Here, in these arms, he slowly sunk to rest;
Beneath yon sacred yew's funereal shade,
With holy rites interr'd, his bones are laid.
May Heaven, since now his frailties are no more,
Its balm of mercy on his errors pour!

May pitying angels, when his fate they hear,
On his past errors drop a healing tear;
And, from the record of his sins, efface
His country's wrongs — the ruin of his race!
"For me, a solitary orphan left,
Of parents, brother, country, — all bereft!
Whence could I wander, whither could I fly?
What further scenes of guilt and misery try?
My sorrows here I rather chose to hide,
Than bear the insults of protecting pride;
Than live on charity, a public show
Of regal servitude and splendid woe.
Though here no costly robes my limbs invest,
Virtue's calm sunshine cheers my tranquil breast;
Though servile labors oft my hands employ,
The freedom of the soul I here enjoy;
Still know and feel the splendor of my birth,
In dignity innate and conscious worth;
Which fortune may obscure, but not disgrace,
Which wrongs may hide, but never can debase:
Since high-born honor will alike prevail,
Deck'd with a crown, or burden'd with a pail.
"Ah, generous Alfred! thou wert form'd to know,
The blessings which from calm contentment flow;
To thee the bounty of indulgent Heaven
Virtues for every state of life hath given;

And hadst thou lived in this low vale confined,
Thou still hadst been the first of all mankind;
Endow'd with every quality to bless,
To brighten happiness, and soothe distress.
Since then, e'en thou, bow'd down by adverse fate,
Thus low art fallen from thy regal state;
Since genius, talent, virtue, strive in vain
The o'erwhelming tides of ruin to restrain,
Quit the dire scene; nor, for a thankless race,
Inured to wrongs, and patient of disgrace,
Again thy life in fields of blood expose,
'Mid treacherous friends, to unrelenting foes.
In every state, or here, or on the throne,
Thy worth, thy virtue must remain thy own.
And though no suppliant crowds around thee wait,
Nor cringing suitors early throng thy gate;
Though no submissive courtiers humbly bend
At every nod, on every glance attend;
Yet the kind welcome of the soul sincere,
The unbought smile and unaffected tear,
May, in soft thrills of sympathy excite
More pleasing raptures of more pure delight:
And though no trumpets thy approach proclaim,
Nor shouts of joy re-echo at thy name;
Yet here the morning lark's aërial lay,
In sweeter notes, salutes the rising day;

And more melodious nightingales prolong,
Through the still night, their solitary song.
Bless'd scenes of innocent and calm repose,
Here let me all my scenes of sorrow close!
From base ingratitude and treachery fly,
And, by a worthless world forgotten, die!"

As these last words she spake, the monarch smiled,
Then answer'd thus, with looks and accent mild.

"Too generous princess! bless'd had been my lot,
To have shared with thee this mean and humble cot;
To have known no other cares than how to prove
My heart deserving of Elsintha's love!
But we, whom fortune doom'd to wear a crown,
Have nought on earth that we can call our own;
In all, our country claims us as its right;
In all, its welfare is our first delight;
And duty bids us every effort try,
And when the last have fail'd, with honor die.

"Nor yet, Elsintha, let thy noble mind,
Despondent sink, to adverse fate resign'd;
Still Hope's bright visions in my fancy rise,
And ope new scenes of glory to my eyes;
Yes, still thy virtues shall adorn a throne,
And Mercia's realm its lawful sovereign own;
Angels themselves shall in thy quarrel fight,
And Heaven assert an injured orphan's right."

"Alas!" she cries, "whatever rights are mine,
To thee, great prince, I freely here resign:
In happier times, perhaps thy steady hand
May bend the restless rabble to command;
But e'en in days of peace, my power were vain
To curb their license, or their rage restrain.
When all the laws of lineal rule are broke,
Their restive passions scorn the fragile yoke;
Make mere ill-humour, grievance, and distress,
And change their monarchs, as they change their dress;
Call lust of plunder zeal for public good,
And love of justice find in thirst of blood.
Inured to license, and averse to toil,
The many starved, the few enrich'd by spoil;
The state's disease admits no common cure,
And thou alone its safety canst ensure;
Repair its shatter'd frame, abuse reform,
And join the wrecks left scatter'd by the storm."
"On one condition," said the king, "I yield
Jointly with thee, the sceptre let me wield;
Give me thyself, and if again to power
We rise, thy kingdom then shall be thy dower;
But if we still the frowns of fate must prove,
Blest shall I die in dear Elsintha's love."
He said, and clasp'd her hand; with downcast eyes
She blush'd assent, and faltering thus replies:

" Why should I longer struggle to conceal
What e'en my struggles serve but to reveal;
What, in our happier days, too well was known,
That poor Elsintha's heart is all thy own?
Oh! had th' all ruling destiny of Heaven,
Some humbler station to thy virtues given!
Even had poverty thy worth opprest,
Rich in thy love, Elsintha had been blest;
Contented to have shared the poorest cot,
By all but thee unnoticed and forgot!
In safety then our lives had pass'd away,
Sweet sleep had crown'd the labors of each day;
Each night these hands had smooth'd thy humble bed,
And this fond arm sustain'd thy weary head;
The smiles of love, the sunshine of the breast,
Had soothed thy cares, and lull'd thy soul to rest:
But now, while struggling in the storms of state,
What terrors threat! what dangers round thee wait!
Too daring prince! ah, whither wilt thou go?
How thus alone oppose th' unnumber'd foe?
How thus alone yon hostile realms explore?
Ah, yet relent! I ne'er shall see thee more."
Here tears began to flow, and heaving sighs
Suppress'd her voice; the king benign replies;
" Gentle Elsintha, — dearest maid, forbear,
Nor sink my soul with bodings of despair;

In Heaven's all-ruling power repose thy trust,
And know, though man is weak, that God is just:
On all alike his guardian spirits wait,
Measure our lives, and mark the course of fate;
In vain to shelter and retreat we run,
In vain the paths of death and danger shun;
Where'er we tread, beneath us gapes the grave,
Nor spares the timid to devour the brave.
As when the leaves of yonder tufted trees,
Are swept to earth by winter's chilling breeze;
Oft those which foremost meet the driving blast,
Adhere the firmest, and drop off the last;
While others, blighted by protecting shade,
Fall of themselves, and perish as they fade.
So, oft the hero, who the battle guides,
And foremost in the ranks of glory rides,
Lives the full term that Heaven to man allows,
And ripe in years to Fate's slow summons bows;
While he, the wretch, who from each danger flies,
Droops in disease, and by inaction dies;
To pain and atrophy resigns his breath,
In lingering torments of protracted death.
"No — rather hope once more thy friend to see
Glorious in arms, and crown'd with victory;
Still unsubdued the rugged North remains,
Still all the East rejects the victor's chains:

And from the extended isthmus of the West,
Hath Devon's earl the lawless horde represt.
Soon too shall spacious Mercia's fickle throng,
Indignant rise against th' oppressor's wrong;
Drive the usurpers from their blood stain'd throne,
And bless'd in lawful sway, their sovereign own.
Already is the rumor widely spread,
That daring insurrection lifts its head;
Here, in a frontier castle's strong retreat,
'Tis said, some chiefs in frequent council meet.
In this disguise I'll try the country round,
Call up what aid may to their cause be found;
Rouse the sunk spirits of the torpid thanes,
With brighter hopes diffused through patriot strains;
And, should sufficient force again unite,
Face the proud victors, and renew the fight.
"But see where, closed the labors of the day,
Our hosts now homeward bend their weary way;
Hide then the secret of my rank and name,
But let the minstrel's muse protection claim."
Thus saying, lightly o'er the trembling strings,
With skilful negligence his hand he flings;
The o'ershadowing rocks the lingering notes prolong,
And echo pleased returns the grateful song.
He sang the blessings of the peasant's life,
Who far from care, from danger, and from strife,

Feels no ill-boding thoughts his peace molest,
Nor turbid passions rankle in his breast.
For him the earth her annual produce yields;
For him she paints the meads, and decks the fields;
For him the trees put forth their vernal shoots,
And bend their branches with autumnal fruits;
While mild content, by liberal plenty fed,
Smiles on his board, and cheers his humble shed.
E'en now, when issuing from the frozen deep,
War's wasteful tempests o'er our country sweep;
And desolation from its native shores,
In endless swarms, the sons of rapine pours;
Though, wrapt in flames, the battlemented wall
And stately tower in smouldering ruins fall;
Secure in poverty, the straw-built shed
Protects from wrongs its guiltless owner's head;
And, as it guards no miser's hoarded store,
E'en to the midnight robber opes the door.
Blest race, whose lives in equal tenor flow!
Who no proud hopes or sad reverses know!
Who safely float down time's oblivious stream,
Lured to no shoals, where glory's beacons gleam;
Still may kind Heaven its guardian cares extend,
And, from the spoiler's rage your fields defend!
Once more may wars and dire contentions cease,
And Plenty smile beneath the reign of Peace!

He ceased: and now return'd, the aged pair
The simple meal with liberal hand prepare;
Freely display, upon their humble board,
Whate'er their rustic treasures could afford;
Welcome, in phrase uncouth, their tuneful guest,
Then spread the leafy couch, and slow retire to rest;
While calm and silent, o'er one half the globe,
All-soothing night extends her dewy robe;
And, in her train, refreshing breezes brings,
Which waft soft slumbers on their downy wings;
To steep in apathy of pain and care,
Each guiltless tenant of earth, sea, and air:
In each, corroding sorrow, lull'd awhile,
Lets death's mild image suffering life beguile.

BOOK THE FOURTH.

Oblivious Sleep, calm Virtue's tranquil guest,
Who shunn'st, in every state, the guilty breast;
Who 'midst a world enslaved couldst free remain,
And tyrants mock, who sigh'd for thee in vain!
Deaf to the flattery and the force of power,
Thou fledst the downy couch and guarded tower,
To smooth th' o'erlabor'd peasant's rugged bed,
And lightly shake thy poppies o'er his head;
Or lull the ship-boy cradled in the shrouds,
While tempests howl'd, and lightnings rent the clouds;
While o'er his head hoarse roaring bursts the wave,
And deep beneath him gaped the watery grave.
By dangers compass'd, and by ills oppress'd,
Thou soothest the wandering hero's tranquil breast;
Enticed alone by Virtue's simple lure,
A heart benignant, and a conscience pure.
Stretch'd on the couch, released from cares he lay,
Till shrilly sweet the lark proclaim'd the day;
Then sudden from the lowly mat he sprung,
Again his harp he o'er his shoulders hung;

Again 'midst woods and meads pursues his way,
While orient sun-beams through the foliage play;
While glittering dew-drops spangle every thorn,
And brighter shine, as brighter dawns the morn;
Till, warmer as the verdant landscape glows,
And richer fragrance scents the blushing rose;
Absorb'd in air they slowly waste away,
And vanish in the pearly haze of day.

As through the humble villages he pass'd,
The minstrel's music paid the short repast;
'Mid crowds attentive, as his harp he strung,
And truth adorn'd with fiction's graces sung.
Oft too, the lordly castle's sumptuous feast,
Receives the bard, to all a welcome guest;
And there his harp he tunes to loftier strains,
And Valor's hope, and Freedom's claim maintains;
Rouses each chieftain in the glorious cause,
To guard his country, and assert her laws;
The invader with united force assail,
Firmly resolved to perish or prevail;
And rather sink at once in glorious death,
Than hold of him a slave's precarious breath;
Than trembling wait until his lawless sway,
Shall deign to take the load of life away.

"Th' hereditary slave, who ne'er hath known
One hour of life which he could call his own,

Content may drag his chain till slow disease,
Or sudden wrath his weary soul release;
By early habits form'd his state to fit,
He only lives to suffer and submit;
To him indignities no pang impart,
Of stripes and blows he only feels the smart;
Nor social cares, nor sympathies molest,
The torpid stillness of his callous breast.
"But bitter is the cup which misery drains,
When mental anguish aids corporeal pains;
And Honor, wounded through the suffering frame,
Barbs all it suffers with upbraiding shame;
While Nature's finer feelings all combine,
Despair's and Sorrow's tortures to refine.
Yet such th' inevitable lot must be,
Of slaves remembering that they once were free;
Whose struggling hearts, elate with conscious pride,
Augment each evil, which they strive to hide;
Scorning, yet crouching, to tyrannic sway,
Unable to resist, yet blushing to obey;
From year to year they linger but to curse,
Yet suffer life through fear of something worse."
Thus wandering through the realm, his lays inspire
The patriot's virtue, and the warrior's fire;
Condense their energy, and raise elate,
The drooping spirits of the palsied state;

Till now the twelfth return of evening grey,
In thickening clouds, involved the orb of day.
'Twas then he came where Wye's impetuous flood
Rolls under beetling rocks o'erhung with wood,
And many a deep and solitary cave
Hoarsely re-echoes to the murmuring wave:
Sudden he hears loud gusts of wind arise,
And darker clouds soon overspread the skies;
In vivid flashes lightnings play around,
And bellowing thunders shake the solid ground;
Deep shades of night o'er all the landscape lour,
And, whirl'd in eddies, swift descends the shower.
The monarch from its gathering fury flies,
To where a cave its shelter safe supplies;
In haste he penetrates the deep retreat,
And rests his limbs upon a craggy seat;
Above the raging tempest howls, below
In cadence hoarse the murmuring waters flow;
With travel weary, and with toil oppress'd,
He closed his eyes, and slowly sunk to rest.
 Thus, in oblivious slumbers wrapt he lay,
Till doubtful twilight closed the fading day:
Past was the storm; the louring clouds were fled,
Or linger'd rolling round the mountain's head;
Sunk was the sun, but golden streaks of light,
Still mark'd the confines of the day and night:

When near the cave the rustling thickets' shake
And tramp of feet the slumbering hero wake.
Amazed he starts. Lo! dripping from the flood,
An armed horseman seeks the o'erhanging wood;
A polish'd corslet glitter'd on his breast,
High o'er his helmet waved his plumed crest,
Rich greaves and cuishes on his limbs he wore,
A spear in rest his right arm deftly bore,
The left a shield, whose spacious orb display'd
A golden cross with rare device inlaid;
But faint and tired he seem'd, and stain'd with blood
His arms appear'd, as nearer now he stood;
His visor open too, disclosed a face,
Whose faded image memory seem'd to trace;
Though doubtful long it paused, till view'd again,
The alter'd face discover'd Langna's thane;
Who, long a wandering chief, had glory sought,
In realms remote, and Moors and Arabs fought;
But now return'd, in hopes that calm repose
The evening of his toilsome life might close;
And that his only child, a daughter fair,
The tranquil scenes of early love might share;
Reclaim'd from errors, too well known to fame,
And worse than errors which had stain'd her name.
The king he knew, although long past the time
Since last he saw him, and in distant clime;

When pilgrims both to Peter's holy seat,
Sought pardon for their sins at Hadrian's feet.
The monarch help'd him from his steed, and led
His tottering footsteps to the rock-form'd shed;
And there, unarm'd as on a stone he lay,
Probed his deep wound, and wash'd the gore away.
Pierced was his shoulder, and strong poison's force,
Around in gangrene, urged its rapid course;
Betwixt the jointed plates an arrow sped,
In vital blood had dipp'd its venom'd head.
And now th' unequal pulse and quicken'd breath,
Proclaim'd the swift and sure approach of death;
With feeling calm, though moved, yet not dismay'd,
The wounded thane the approach of fate survey'd.
" 'Tis just," he cries; " the long-suspended blow,
Comes Heaven-directed, not less sure than slow;
Youth's wilful folly, manhood's fouler crime,
Recoil in judgments, now matured by time.
Alas! when health and spirits swell'd my soul,
It scorn'd all moral, all divine, control;
And, borne along in Passion's maddening tide,
God's sacred word, and man's rebuke defied.
For then, by vain and frothy systems taught,
This peopled world one vast machine I thought;
Revolving as impell'd by motion blind,
Without the guidance of directing mind;

And that, unheeded in the general plan,
Like other reptiles, crawl'd the reptile man;
To whom, since Heaven for no account would call,
The scale of pleasure was the rule in all;
'Twas such to me, in dissipation gay,
Life's short meridian glided swift away;
Till tired of common vices, lawless love
Doom'd me a stain of deeper guilt to prove.

" It was a faithful friend's and neighbour's fate,
To have too lovely and too frail a mate;
She stood some siege indeed; but still she fail'd,
And youth and nature over vows prevail'd;
The injured husband yielded with his life,
To this dire hand, his now too worthless wife;
In combat yielded, as false honor taught,
I seal'd in blood the wrongs which treachery wrought.
She had a brother too; but, in the field
Disarm'd and vanquish'd, he was forced to yield;
An archer famed: perhaps his hand hath sped
The shaft which now shall lay me with the dead;
But foil'd and baffled then, his pride forbore,
With rude reproaches, to insult me more.

" To save his sister then too late I sought,
And heal the wounds my guilty love had wrought;
'Twas all I could: one way was left alone,
To soothe her griefs, and for my crimes atone;

We married; — and seven years together spent
In pleasures — yes — but never in content.
Some inward cloud on all still seem'd to lour,
And sadden e'en enjoyment's happiest hour;
The world's reproaches could not pass unknown,
Too well, alas! we felt them in our own;
And nought, except a daughter's pledge, retain'd
The lingering lees of love that yet remain'd.
" Disgusted oft I left her joyless bed,
And oft again to venal beauty fled;
In transient revelry of lust, awhile,
Labor'd upbraiding conscience to beguile;
And blunt, in sensual sports, th' envenom'd dart,
Which, barb'd with anguish, rankled in my heart.
" From such returning one accursed night,
(Yet my soul shrinks with horror and affright!)
As all alone I traversed Garway's wood,
The murder'd husband's form before me stood!
'Twas no deception: a surrounding light
Display'd his image clearly to my sight;
I heard his voice too: ' At this hour,' he cries,
' The hapless victim of thy treachery dies;
The infant pledge, too, of thy guilty love,
Lives but thy bane and lasting curse to prove;
And chastise Mercia for her base neglect
To punish wrongs and sacred vows protect;

A dire example of th' account which Heaven
Requires from all to whom its trusts are given;
Condemn'd for crimes permitted, they atone
For other's sins, by sufferance made their own;
In ruin prostrate, mightiest nations weep
That scorn of vice which bade their justice sleep.'

" The phantom spoke, and, in a meteor bright,
Rose through the wood, and vanish'd from my sight.
Bewilder'd and amazed, awhile I stray
Where'er my steed unguided took his way;
But, with the morning's dawn as home I sped,
The sable 'scutcheon shew'd my wife was dead.
With cheeks collapsed and shrunk, with hollow eyes,
A morbid mass of torpid earth she lies;
And every feature, which once beam'd delight,
All pale and ghastly now appall'd the sight!
Her last sad tears had wept her blasted fame,
Her last sad words dealt curses on my name;
Curses too well deserved, too justly due,
Which now my soul in death's last pangs pursue;
Record its guilt, too foul to be forgiven,
And shame the mercy of indulgent Heaven!

" Though chill'd with horror, — helpless in despair,
My infant daughter still required my care;
If ought by pious prudence could be done,
The ills foretold to deprecate or shun;

And separate, from her guilty parent's fate,
The judgments which her injured country wait.
" What then seem'd best, though fatal hath it been,
I sought the court, and placed her with the queen.
O had she died! ere thus become the wife
Of him whose treachery takes her father's life!
Of cursed Ceulf, who my faith beguiled,
Then laid the ambush in yon thickets wild;
Lest known, I might my child to grace restore,
Who thinks me perish'd on a distant shore.
Heaven knows how oft I sought that life to lose,
In just atonement, 'gainst its impious foes;
Nor from those holy wars had e'er return'd,
But her dire deeds and Mercia's wrongs I learn'd;
Whence, urged by fondest hopes, with speed I came,
To save my country, and my child reclaim.
" But life-ebbs fast; then know that, at this hour,
The Mercian thanes collect their scatter'd power;
Roused by thy voice, their forces they unite
To vindicate the injured orphan's right;
To make this realm its lawful sovereign own,
And hurl the usurper from his blood-stain'd throne.
Offa and Ella there in arms attend,
And aged Sigebert, thy father's friend;
Both Alcimund and Osbright too are there,
And Ida pants the glorious toils to share;

Ardulf and Ernulf join the warlike throng,
And Ethelred the swift, and Aribert the strong;
Where Goodrich lifts its battlemented towers,
In proud array, they marshal now their powers;
While wide extended o'er the plains below,
In numbers confident, attends the foe.
" Quit then this peaceful harp and minstrel's dress,
Again let mail of steel thy muscles press;
Grasp this good sword, and this good buckler wield,
And let this courser bear thee to the field.
The Moor and Saracen in vain have stood,
Against that spear: 'tis stain'd with impious blood;
'Tis wont in Heaven's and honor's cause to fight,
And now shall triumph in an orphan's right.
But, ah! when victory on thy cause hath smiled,
Punish the tyrant, but preserve my child;
Preserve my Ethelinde! in youth forlorn,
I left her heir to infamy and scorn;
A helpless orphan, to the world consign'd,
From parents sprung by vices only join'd;
With their example fresh in memory's view,
And no kind guardian better paths to shew;
What wonder if her soul from virtue stray'd,
And strong temptations unopposed, obey'd!
Yet still, perhaps, her heart is only frail,
And grace o'er erring nature may prevail.

" Then reverence yet a dying father's prayer,
And what stern Justice claims, let Mercy spare;
Some holy convent's solitary gloom,
Her fatal charms and errors may entomb;
Where penance may restore her peace with Heaven,
And all her crimes and frailties be forgiven.
I can no more, remember how I fell,
The rest forget: Heaven too forgive! — farewell!"
Faintly he spoke: then thrice convulsive sigh'd,
And raised his swimming eyes to Heaven, — and died!
The monarch dropp'd a tear; then safely laid
The corse, till rites could, as ordain'd, be paid:
And here awhile, in meditative mood,
The glittering armour, scatter'd round him, view'd,
Till sudden starting from his silent trance,
He grasps the sword, and shakes the ponderous lance.
And as released from toil, the veteran steed
That strays neglected o'er the dewy mead,
If chance the beagle's distant cry he hears,
Lifts high his crest, and points his listening ears;
Feels his stout heart within his bosom bound,
Shakes his redundant mane, and proudly paws the ground;
So Alfred felt his heart with rapture beat,
As war's proud hopes again his wishes meet;

So as the arms he views, his spirits rise,
Glow in his cheeks, and sparkle in his eyes.
"Yes! yet," he cries, "Heaven's justice rules the world,
Destruction yet may on our foes be hurl'd;
At least 'tis given, again our fate to try,
To live with honor, or with glory die!"
He said; then round his limbs the armour braced,
The glittering helm his manly temples graced;
High on his arm, he lifts th' emblazon'd shield,
Mounts the proud steed, and seeks the embattled field:
Though dimly still the shades of night surround,
And tints and forms in one broad mass confound;
Save where th' unruffled stream expanded lies,
And, deep in gloom, reflects the starry skies;
Or rippling flickers to the glimmering light,
Which guards the weary woodman through the night;
And scares the gaunt and hungry wolf away,
That prowling round him scents his destin'd prey;
While near, his faithful dog, with watchful bark,
Alone disturbs the silence of the dark.
'Mid beetling rocks, through solitary groves,
In unknown tracks perplex'd, the monarch roves;
But upward follows still the winding stream,
As dim reflections on its surface gleam;

Till, with returning day, 'midst lofty trees,
At length the castle's loftier towers he sees;
Which high above their crested summits rear,
While throng'd below the warriors arm'd appear.

It was the hour when first the opening dawn
Shews orient pearl, bespangling every lawn;
When, under peace's mild and gentle reign,
The morning bird awakes the happy swain,
And calls the rosy milk-maid from her bed,
While love's light dreams yet hover round her head;
But now, when dire dissension rages round,
And war's red banners every joy confound,
The brazen trumpet sounds its loud alarms,
And havoc rouses to the din of arms.
Impatient for the fight, the Mercians throng
Around their chiefs, and eager rush along;
The valiant chiefs their prancing steeds bestrode,
And, bright in arms, amid their squadrons rode;
Experienced Sigebert's supreme control
Surveys, directs, and regulates the whole;
Experienced Sigebert, whose gentle sway
Siluria's hills and fertile vales obey;
Where, deep ingulph'd in rocks, the rapid Team
Pours the clear crystal of its limpid stream.

Around the aged chief a chosen band
Of valiant knights attend his high command;

Adventurers bold, to toils and dangers bred,
Who oft in Virtue's cause had bravely bled;
Who in her sacred quarrel now unite
To vindicate the exiled orphan's right;
Resolved each last extreme of war to try,
Alike prepared to triumph, or to die.
'Mid these, with visor closed, the monarch press'd,
And thus the venerable chief address'd:
"Accept, great champion of thy country's right,
The faithful service of a wandering knight;
Who, though unknown his arms, conceal'd his name,
Hath lived no stranger to the lists of fame;
Whose spear hath oft in fields of death been tried;
Whose sword hath oft in Danish blood been dyed;
Whose bosom, scarr'd with many an honest wound,
In these bad times, hath still been loyal found;
Who dares the sternest call of Fate obey,
And rush on death, if Honor points the way;
Happy in Virtue's sacred cause to close
This lingering scene of unremitted woes."
"Welcome! whoe'er thou art," the chief replies,
"We share thy sorrows, and thy succour prize;
Full well thy form, thy mien, thy words proclaim
A warrior bold, of no ignoble name;
And whether private wrong or public care
Oppress thy soul, 'tis what we all must bear;

For sorrows from exhaustless fountains flow,
And suffering is the lot of all below.
Yet, while in ruin sunk his country lies,
Can private griefs bedew the patriot's eyes?
Can private wrongs, or private troubles part
The proud resentments of the warrior's heart?
No: 'tis one common cause, which now inspires
Each generous wish, and every bosom fires;
Sunk are all smaller interests; 'tis that cause
Points every spear, and every faulchion draws;
And surely Heaven that sacred cause befriends,
When such defenders to its aid it sends!"

Well pleased the monarch heard the reverend sage,
And bow'd submissive to the sense of age:
Then, 'mid the squadron, as a private knight,
He rode to share the dangers of the fight.
The Wye's broad stream alone the hosts divides,
Which feebly now, with wasted current glides:
The bold adventurers press along the shore,
Try the deep gulphs, the shallow fords explore;
Through the swift tide, in order firm, advance,
Present the shield, and shake the threatening lance.

High on the farther shore, the slaughterous Dane
Waves his proud banners o'er the plunder'd plain:
In loose array, his iron files extends,
And, confident in strength, the foe attends.

Young Eric, Gustaf's valiant son, commands
The veteran valor of their steady bands;
While Ceulf from the Mercian rabble drew
A venal, timid, disaffected crew;
Who, o'er the field in wild disorder spread,
A shapeless mass display'd, without a head.
Boldly the patriot chiefs their squadrons guide,
In martial order, through the foaming tide:
Before the rest th' adventurous knights advance,
Poise the broad shield, and couch the quivering lance;
And now, emerging from the crystal flood,
In shining ranks along the shore they stood.
Th' indignant Danes with equal ardor glow,
Clang their bright arms, and dare th' approaching foe;
Till now, on either side, the trumpets' breath
Gives the loud signal, harbinger of Death.
Instant the crash of battle shakes the ground,
And horses' feet and clattering arms resound;
With bristled spears, the adverse squadrons close,
Drive horse to horse, and shield to shield oppose.
As when conflicting tides the ocean pours
Round the bare cliffs of Caledonia's shores,
Waves against waves, in whitening surges rise,
And bellowing thunders rend the polar skies;
So, headlong Fury either host confounds,
And hoarse and loud the din of battle sounds.

Here shouts the victor, there the vanquish'd moans;
Here gasps the dying, there the wounded groans;
Now Anger's threats are mix'd with Pity's sighs,
Now Vengeance rages, and now Anguish cries.
In various forms Destruction stalks around,
And streams of blood embrue the crimson ground.
Serene amid the storm, great Alfred rides,
Directs the battle, and its fury guides;
Now pours the tempest where the foe retreats,
And now the o'erwhelming tide of victory meets;
Re-kindles courage through the broken bands,
And, 'gainst assailing hosts, their bulwark stands.
Amazed young Eric saw the stranger knight
Guide and control the fortune of the fight.
"And who is he?" indignantly he cries,
"What rash adventurer now our force defies?
And dares a servile Saxon thus maintain,
Rebellious war against his lord, the Dane?"
He said; and, through the close and firm array
Of fighting squadrons, boldly forced his way;
O'er heaps of dying and of dead he rode,
On helms and helmed heads his courser trod;
Till now he came to where the unknown knight
Singly maintain'd the fortune of the fight.
Great Alfred saw the daring chief advance,
And poised his shield, and couch'd his ponderous lance.

They spur their steeds—at once the coursers spring,—
They meet; their clashing arms together ring.
Aloft their shiver'd spears in splinters fly,
The studded fragments glitter in the sky;
The fiery coursers from the shock rebound,
And stunn'd, brave Eric tumbles on the ground.
Swift o'er the prostrate foe the victor pass'd.
As o'er the prostrate pine the tempest's blast
Impetuous drives, and, with resistless force,
Through distant forests wings its wasteful course;
So through the crowd rush'd Alfred's fiery steed,
Beneath his hoofs the helpless rabble bleed;
His slaughterous sword, with blood of warriors red,
Deals strokes of death on many a helmed head;
Bold Ella follows where he leads the way,
And Ide and Alcimund their force display;
Ardulf and Ernulf press amid the throng,
And Ethelred the swift, and Aribert the strong;
On every side they deal destruction round,
And lay whole squadrons bleeding on the ground.
Meantime young Eric, on his batter'd shield,
By menial squires, was carried from the field;
Beneath a spreading oak the chief they placed,
Unbound his corselet, and his helm unbraced;
And, in the crystal stream that near them flow'd,
Wash'd from his face and hair the clotted blood;

When, slow recovering from his death-like trance,
Again he mounts the steed, and grasps the lance;
Lifts on his arm again the ponderous shield,
And burns once more to try the doubtful field.
But lost was now the fortune of the day,
And wild Confusion follow'd pale Dismay;
The traitor Ceulf first the rout began,
First from the field his servile Mercians ran;
A faithless crew, whom bribes and force alone
Induced the usurper's hated power to own;
Who, e'en while dragg'd to the detested fight,
Pray'd for defeat, and meditated flight.
In various ways the scatter'd rabble fled,
And o'er the neighbouring districts widely spread;
But Ceulf's self, as fear augments his speed,
To Ariconium's walls directs his steed.
There, on the tower that guards the southern gate,
The queen in anxious expectation sate;
Alternate hopes and fears her bosom sway,
As Fancy paints the fortunes of the day.
Now shouts of battle and the din of war,
Seem in the winds to murmur from afar;
She starts and listens: — but the dreaded sound
Was past, and awful silence reigns around.
Now flying squadrons 'mid the distant trees,
Trembling she looks for, and then thinks she sees.

"Then all is lost, alas!" she faintly cries;
"E'en now, perhaps, the youthful hero dies!
Ah, cruel thought! — but yet, no more I hear
The dreaded sound; — no fugitives appear.
'Twas but a vision o'erlabor'd thought,
Design'd by Terror, and by Fancy wrought.
Yes! yet I hope; he surely cannot fail;
Such virtue, strength, and valor must prevail."
Thus the long morning of the tedious day,
In anxious moments, slowly pass'd away;
But not for Ceulf was her heart thus moved,
Another passion now her bosom proved.
Pall'd with possession, of his station proud,
He to her will no more obsequious bow'd;
No more with gratitude and ardor strove
To feed, to flatter, and reward her love;
But grown imperious, negligent, and bold,
Blind to her charms, and to her fondness cold;
He scorn'd her person, and usurp'd her state,
And changed her guilty love to deadly hate.
While yet her heart with fresh resentment burn'd,
Her scorn'd affection to young Eric turn'd.
At first his fame in arms her fancy fired,
She prized the hero whom the world admired;
And still, as more she saw and more she knew,
The more she felt the world's applauses true;

For Nature, to the Dane profusely kind,
Had beauty, strength, and elegance combined;
Attempering all with every manly grace
Of mien majestic, and commanding face.
Stern were, indeed, the glances of his eye,
But mildly beam'd through smiles of courtesy;
And courtesy, which thus through sternness shone,
With double charm her heart's affection won;
And though she found his speech was not refined,
'Twas still th' effusion of the noblest mind;
The soul's proud eloquence, which scorning art,
Comes from, and goes directly to the heart;
With all pure Nature's richest treasures fraught,
Of generous feeling and exalted thought.

"Unhappy Ethelinde!" she oft would say,
"What fatal error led thy soul astray!
Why, since thy heart was doom'd to lawless love,
Didst thou not choose the man it could approve?
Ah, gallant Eric! hadst thou then been known,
This wretch accursed had never shared my throne;
And would thy valiant arm now set me free,
Throne, title, empire should be all for thee.

Presumptuous hope! thy virtuous soul disdeigns
A guilty wretch, whom foul dishonor stains!
Whose heart so senseless and so mean could prove,
As this degraded reptile e'er to love;

And let the worst and basest of mankind,
In baser servitude, enthral thy mind;
Till, sunk in misery's last and lowest state,
Contempt alone protects thee now from hate!"
Thus musing oft, while tears bedew'd her eyes,
She mingled vows with vain repentant sighs;
But never dared the hero's heart to prove,
Or tell the dangerous secret of her love.
Yet would she oft entreat him to recite
His deeds and dangers in each doubtful fight;
And while he spoke, with fond attentive ear
And looks of sympathy, the story hear;
Weep at his perils, — at his triumphs smile,
Yet use each art her passion to beguile;
Though ardent love, through every coy disguise,
Glows in her cheeks, and glistens in her eyes.
But, though not cold nor senseless to her charms,
Proud Honor's shield the hero's bosom arms;
The wrath of Heaven, the world's reproach he fears,
And, while he scorns his host, his rights reveres.
Yet, courteous still to Ethelinde, and kind,
He soothes, yet feeds the anguish of her mind;
Unconsciously exerts the power to please,
And lulls, yet aggravates her heart's disease.
The hours, which martial toils and duties spared,
With her, in converse sweet, each day he shared;

And wonder'd oft to find how swift the day,
Charm'd by her voice harmonious, pass'd away;
And with what lingering sloth it travell'd o'er
The space that should those blissful hours restore.
Oft absent too, would busy Memory trace
Each winning smile and unaffected grace;
Th' inviting glances of her piercing eyes,
Her transient blushes, and half-smother'd sighs.
Though rigid Honor and stern Pride reprove
Each wish intrusive of illicit love;
And jealous Virtue exiles from his breast
Each hope that dares her tranquil sway molest;
But suffers still th' insidious name of friend,
Secure, its unsuspected veil to lend;
For harsh and cruel sure 'twere to deny
A boon so small as grateful courtesy.
Experienced every passion to explore,
She saw his struggles, and still loved him more.
Hence, 'midst her agonizing hopes and fears,
For him alone were all her vows and tears;
For his return alone she anxious pray'd,
But wish'd her tyrant in the dust were laid;
And e'en had bless'd the rebel's vengeful sword,
Tinged with the blood of her ungrateful lord,
Would Heaven but yet restore, secure from bane,
And crown'd with conquest, the too generous Dane.

"Yes!" she exclaim'd, "if yet the powers above
Abhor ingratitude, and justice love;
Though I with guilty voice their aid invoke,
That wretch shall sink beneath their vengeful stroke.
Weltering in blood, let me behold him lie,
Then strike me too! contented will I die!
Nor of my hard untimely fate complain,
O godlike Eric! could I see thee reign."
Thus did she say; when entering at the gate,
She sees the object of her scorn and hate,
Escaped inglorious from the fatal field,
With arms unstain'd, with unindented shield;
Breathless and faint he seem'd through fear and flight,
But shew'd no signs of having shared the fight.
From him she learn'd the fortunes of the day,
How, pierced with wounds, their squadrons vanquish'd lay:—
"All's lost," he cried: "the vengeful foe is near;
Scarce have I 'scaped the fury of his spear;
E'en now I saw the valiant Eric slain,
E'en now I saw him tumbled on the plain;
A lifeless corse I saw him on his shield,
All pale and ghastly, carried from the field;
Fly then! ah fly the dangers of this place,
Nor dare the vengeance of this faithless race!"
"Fly thou, detested wretch!" the queen replies,
While maddening fury flashes from her eyes;

" Swift from th' impending bolt of vengeance fly;
For know, with thee I even scorn to die!
Still more to live thy infamy to share,
And, with my own, the world's reproaches bear;
Fly then! and save thy poor remains of life, —
I live no more a recreant coward's wife!"
Firm in despair she spoke; then turn'd away,
His pressing dangers would not brook delay;
He mounts his steed, and westward o'er the plain,
Sought the encampment of the conquering Dane;
Who now from Wilton's field his squadrons led,
And wide o'er Eddington his banners spread.
Meanwhile the queen, determined on her fate,
In silence, long unmoved and sullen, sate;
Then starting quick, " Farewell, vain world!" she cries,
" Farewell, false joys, which pride and folly prize!
Farewell the pomp of power, the shew of state,
And all the empty pageants of the great;
And thou, bright fountain of eternal light,
Parent of nature, source of all delight;
The pure effulgence of whose cheering rays,
For these sad eyes, alas! no more shall blaze!
O sun, farewell! farewell, ye waving woods,
Ye flowery meads, and sweetly murmuring floods;
Ye verdant vales, where spotless once and pure,
In conscious innocence, I roved secure;

Where still my heart felt Nature's genuine smile,
And knew no sorrow, while it knew no guile;
Where joys serene in Hope's bright visions grew,
And wing'd with bliss, th' uncounted moments flew.
Farewell for ever! let oblivion close
This last sad scene of follies, crimes, and woes!
Nor bitter Scorn, nor sneering Pity tell,
From whence I rose, or how or where I fell;
The doom hereafter, Justice may prepare,
The power that dooms will give me strength to bear;
Or Mercy, which to all hath oped the grave,
To all extend Redemption's power to save;
Nor Charity its healing balm deny,
Nor render vain the privilege to die!
At Heaven's tribunal then, I yield my breath,
To live's despair! at least there's hope in death."
She spake; and, o'er the battlemented wall,
Thrice did she stoop, and thrice she tried to fall;
But sudden horrors thrill through every vein,
Appal her courage, and her heart restrain;
She shudders at the dreary gulph profound,
Again starts back! again she looks around.
Bright were the heavens, and cloudless was the day,
Calm was the air, the smiling landscape gay;
She grieved to think how soon would all be past;
That this fond lingering look must be her last!

Skies, meads, and rivers, she shall see no more!
Alas! they ne'er so charming seem'd before.
" And shall I then," again she starting cried,
" Live the proud victor's insults to abide!
To bear the scorn of fools, a public shew,
Of fallen infamy, and worthless woe!
To mount the scaffold, while a gazing crowd,
With whisper'd sneers, or execrations loud,
Shall hail the fatal stroke that ends my life,
And curse the base usurper's guilty wife!
Or even stretch'd upon the rack to lie,
With dislocated limbs, and piecemeal die!
Or mangled left, and dead to common pain,
Alive to fiercer stimulants remain!
Till bound by worse tormentors to the stake,
I feel new pangs my wearied senses wake!
And hear, while scorching flames around me rise,
Loud shouts of triumph mock my piercing cries,
And scoffs deride my dying agonies!
No! rather let me brave o'erwhelming Fate,
Though Hell gape wide, and fiends to catch me wait!
Whate'er its torments, the impending curse
Of base-born insolence and scorn is worse.
No parents', child's, or brother's claims oppose
My free departure — all men are my foes.
Conceived in guilt, the offspring of deceit,

I stand predestined to endure their hate;
Nature's vile outcast! wretched and forlorn,
The heir of crimes and sorrow was I born;
And launch'd on life's wide ocean thus alone,
Its ills, whate'er ensue, are all my own.
Hence, then, all selfish fears and scruples vain,
That dare the purpose of my soul restrain!
No duty, love, or gratitude, I owe,
All claimants gone, I too may freely go!"
She paused; — the din of battle sounded near,
And lo! in arms the hostile troops appear;
Brave Eric, and a few bold knights opposed
Their entrance, while the ponderous gates are closed.
With batter'd helm, and cuirass smear'd with blood,
Close to the tower the youthful hero stood;
And still, where'er he sees the foe advance,
Drives his bold steed, and points his thirsty lance;
Undaunted waits till all his friends are past,
Then turning oft, retreats, and enters last:
As the wild bull, when gored with many a wound,
Slowly retreats before the steady hound;
Oft turns indignant, and, with armed brows,
High o'er his head his rash pursuer throws.
But as, on some parch'd mead, the fading flower
Revives and freshens with the summer shower;
Or, wither'd by the heats of day, renews

Its bloom and fragrance, steep'd in evening's dews;
So wither'd by despair and sunk in woe,
Again the queen's reviving spirits flow;
Again life's color to her cheeks returns;
Again love's ardor in her bosom burns;
When safe in arms she sees the valiant Dane,
Still in her cause th' unequal fight maintain;
When safe she sees him pass within the wall,
And hears behind the huge portcullis fall.
Once more sweet Hope re-animates her breast,
In eager haste, to meet the chief, she press'd;
Then clasp'd his blood-stain'd hand, while grateful sighs
Burst from her heart, and tears bedew'd her eyes.
" Ah take !" she cried, " since thus thou deign'st to save —
Take me from hence to live thy meanest slave!
Whate'er my lot, contented will I be,
If all I suffer, but proceed from thee.
But save — ah! save me from this vengeful race,
From public punishment, and vile disgrace;
From racks and torturing fires, of which to think,
Makes every shuddering nerve with horror shrink;
Or, if thy noble pride disdeign to fly,
Ah! let me here, by thy kind office die;
Death I can brave, but agonising pain
And foul reproach my soul can ill sustain;

Exposed, a spectacle of scorn and hate,
For gaping fools and scoffing knaves to bait
While writhing at the stake, my mangled frame
Breathes its last sigh amidst devouring flame.
Ah! rather here let all my miseries end,
And instant death release me, as a friend!"
With patriot cares perplex'd, he scarcely hears
Her supplications, or regards her tears,
Much as he loved; when public dangers press'd,
No private interests e'er could move his breast.
Anxious for her, more anxious was he still,
The sacred trusts of duty to fulfill,
And save what yet the fatal field had left,
Of every aid but his and Heaven's bereft;
No magazines were stored to feed the throng,
His force was weaken'd, his opponent's strong;
The walls were old, extensive, and decay'd,
The townsmen feeble, fickle and dismay'd;
To risk a siege, or labor to retain
The place by force, he saw, would be in vain.
To aged Sigebert he therefore sends —
Before the Mercian chiefs the herald bends,
And says, "The Danes no other terms require,
Than from the town in safety to retire;
And that, whoe'er had been their party's friend,
Might share their fortune, and their flight attend."

To this the Mercian chiefs with joy agree,
They only fought to set their country free;
Nor did they wish revengeful to enclose
Within their city's walls its direst foes;
Who, driven by dark Despair, and mad with ire,
Might lay all desolate with sword and fire.

The terms agreed, the Danes young Eric led
To where the king his thick pavilions spread;
Their king, brave Guthron, who, on Wilton's plain,
Had dyed the ground with blood of Saxons slain;
And still advancing in his bold career,
O'er vanquish'd Britain shakes his dreaded spear.

BOOK THE FIFTH.

HAPPY the bards, who, ere the world grew old,
Their wonderous tales, to crowds believing told;
And, by no limits of creation bound,
Still undiscover'd realms of Fancy found;
Where Nature, by no climate's stint confined,
Wanton'd luxuriant as the poet's mind;
And gently yielding to his plastic skill,
Bent every law his purpose to fulfill;
With visionary forms, throng'd fancied woods,
And echoed murmurs from unreal floods;
New-modell'd all; and, on a fairer plan,
Regenerated God's vile image man.
Each bubbling fountain was some nymph's abode,
And every river had its guardian god;
The unfathom'd ocean local spirits knew,
Who earth's dark centre oped to mental view;
Th' unnumber'd progeny of Heaven through all
Appear'd, responsive to the poet's call;
And when, in solitary wilds remote,
Resounding rocks prolong'd his pensive note,

Fond Echo, lingering in some name beloved,
Th' inspiring muses' vocal presence proved:
Where'er he wander'd Fancy's realms he found,
Enchanting visions ever hover'd round,
Peopled each dreary desert that he trod,
And made this world one temple of its God;
Till prying Science Heaven and Earth unveil'd,
And Fancy droop'd, by rigid Sense assail'd;
No mystic regions now left unexplored,
Whose distance might enchanted scenes afford.
Yet still, coy goddess, let thy jocund smile,
The scowl, that lours on Wisdom's brow, beguile;
And in thy rainbow colours, deftly shew,
Unreal visions, in their semblance true;
Which Nature recognising finds alone
The imputed features fairer than her own.
Beneath the tropics, where, with equal tide,
Th' unvaried currents of the ocean glide;
Where no tempestuous gale, or sudden breeze,
Roughens the surface of the tepid seas;
An isle, with everlasting verdure spread,
Lifts from the waves its solitary head;
Eternal odors from its shores exhale,
Ambrosial fragrance scents each passing gale;
Still opening flowers in every valley blow,
Still ripening fruits in every thicket grow;

Fruits of all kinds, which art or toil supplies,
Bloom without culture, and spontaneous rise;
On bending branches, here rich nect'rines shine,
There golden citrons lift the clustering vine;
Pears and pomegranates mix their loaded boughs,
And whilst one ripens, still another blows.
From mossy fountains and high-vaulted caves,
Clear limpid rivulets pour their gurgling waves;
Now from steep rocks, in whitening cataracts foam,
Now through the vales, in crystal mazes roam;
Or deeply stagnant, in the peaceful glade,
Spread the smooth lake imbrown'd in quivering shade.
Flowers of all hues the varied banks adorn,
Bright with the freshness of the vernal morn;
And, by the soil's luxuriant virtue fed,
For ever round their fragrant odors spread.
No tempests here, nor blackening clouds descend;
No bolts of fire the ambient ether rend;
No echoing thunders 'mid the mountains sound;
No struggling vapors shake the solid ground;
No caves mephitic breathe their poisonous breath;
No venom'd reptiles point the dart of death;
No hungry lion roars, or tiger growls,
Or slaughterous savage through the forest prowls;
But endless Peace, o'er all the wide domain,
Spreads the mild blessings of her equal reign.

Here souls released, by toils and sufferings tried,
Who lived to virtue, or for honor died;
Whose faith unshaken, and whose conscience clear,
Ne'er swerved through lucre, and ne'er shrunk through fear;
Restored to happier life, through ages prove
Unsated bliss in still requited love.
Here, fresh in youth, they stray through myrtle bowers,
Or bask reclined on beds of fragrant flowers;
Till full matured in Virtue's bloom they rise
To share the brighter blessings of the skies;
Shake off dull matter's dross, and unconfined,
Float in the abyss of universal mind.

Deep in a vale, the centre of the isle,
On spangled pillars rose a splendid pile;
Vast rocks of crystal, on each other raised,
With various tints of bright refraction blazed;
Irregularly great the work appear'd,
By Nature's hand, with Art's contrivance rear'd;
Within cool grots in winding labyrinths bend,
And sparred roofs o'er spacious halls extend;
Where, dimly clear, a mild refracted light
Beam'd through the vaults, and cheer'd the wearied sight.

Here, hoarsely murmuring through the lucid caves,
Two bubbling fountains pour'd their limpid waves;

With wonderous properties alike endow'd,
In equal currents both perpetual flow'd.
To one the Powers Divine had given the charm,
All-conquering Time to vanquish and disarm;
To invigorate age, and in the cheeks renew
Youth's purple bloom, and Pleasure's roseate hue;
With auburn curls the hoary head to deck;
With vivid freshness swell the wither'd neck;
And, in the evening of a life serene,
At sixty shew the graces of sixteen.
The other, with its pure pellucid dew,
Could Beauty's charms and Love's attractions strew;
In every glance, in every smile, impart
Resistless magic to enthrall the heart;
With soft persuasion, and alluring grace,
Inspire the tongue, and animate the face;
And, in each look and gesture, spread the fire
Of mild Affection, or of fierce Desire.
 Hither, with speed more swift than darts the light,
Britannia's guardian angel wing'd his flight;
O'er seas, o'er continents, o'er hills and dales,
On lightest ether borne, serene he sails;
Nor adverse winds or storms his course delay,
High over all he cuts the liquid way;
Tempests and hurricanes contend below,
As o'er th' Atlantic's wide expanse they blow;

Faintly the Andes' glittering tops appear,
As, through the clouds, their snow-capp'd heads they rear;
And scarcely seen, 'mid boundless wilds of wood,
The vast Maragnon pours his copious flood.
Onward the angel pass'd; — then swift descends,
Where the blest isle its flowery vales extends;
Where, from their crystal founts and lucid caves,
The potent waters gush in limpid waves;
There hovering over, in the sacred dew
He dipp'd his wings, and back to Britain flew.
Swifter than thought, to Mercia's realms he sped,
And waved his plumes o'er Ethelinda's head,
As unattired within her tent she lay,
And drown'd in sleep the labors of the day.
O'er her fair face and beauteous limbs he strews
The cool refreshment of the balmy dews;
Instant, in brighter tints of glowing red,
Love's blushing roses o'er her cheeks are spread;
Her glossy skin renews its virgin white,
Fresh as the lily opening to the light;
And pure as snow, that from incumbent clouds,
Th' untrodden summits of Olympus shrouds.
Visions of bliss and gleams of young desire
Glow in her thoughts, and all her fancy fire.
"Go now," he cries, "and let thy fatal charms
Arrest the fury of the Danish arms;

From rival love enkindle jealous hate,
Distract their counsels, and divide their state;
In civil broil, their envious chiefs employ,
Each other's power to weaken and destroy."
The beauteous queen awakes; but still she hears
The voice celestial vibrate in her ears;
Slowly the fading visions melt away,
As brighter shines the rising orb of day;
Reluctantly she view'd the dawning light,
And bless'd the sweet delusions of the night.
But now arisen, she felt, with gay surprise,
Her heart beat lightly, and her spirits rise;
Bright gleams of hope again her soul beguile,
And fickle Fortune seems again to smile.
Pleased, in her faithful mirror then she view'd
The vivid freshness of her youth renew'd;
The hue of grief, the frown of anxious care,
No more her pallid cheeks and forehead wear;
But, 'mid the lily's lucid white, disclose
The blushing bloom that tints the opening rose.
Again the heartfelt joy, the winning wile
Beams in her eye, and wantons in her smile;
Again the graces in those ringlets play,
That, o'er her heaving bosom, loosely stray;
Again, with nectar and ambrosia, tip
Th' elastic rubies of her turgid lip.

Though patriot cares and griefs awhile suppress'd
Each tender sentiment in Eric's breast,
Yet soon, enamour'd of the beauteous dame,
His heart unwilling felt the secret flame.
Respect and honor now no more confined
The native ardor of his youthful mind:
For Ceulf's base and ignominious flight
Had cancell'd all the host's and husband's right.
The victor's prize, of all her state bereft,
By treachery vile the youthful queen was left:
Nor had the wretch exalted by her love,
To save her life or guard her honor strove;
But, on th' approach of danger, skulk'd away,
And left her to the foe, a helpless prey.
Sure he, to whom alone her life she owed,
Deserved what now her gratitude bestow'd;
Sure 'twould be base again to yield her charms
And proffer'd love to a vile coward's arms.
Thus Eric reason'd, as, with strength renew'd,
Their destined way they onward still pursued;
Close to each other, side by side they rode,
Oft as they gazed, their cheeks with blushes glow'd;
Their eyes, with blended rays of keen desire,
Contagious dart the soul's electric fire;
Sighs half suppress'd and faltering words proclaim
Their trembling ecstasies and mutual flame.

And now again, when evening claim'd repose,
And twinkling stars the day's effulgence close,
One tent receives them; there in bliss they lay,
And sigh'd to view the swift return of day.

Meanwhile Britannia's angel sought the caves
And dreary domes where Discord's demon raves;
Whence, o'er the earth, Dissension's flames are spread,
And civil broil and mad sedition fed;
Regions accursed, amid the watery waste,
A prey to endless desolation placed.

Where the dull ocean stagnates round the pole,
And torpid waves 'mid frozen islands roll;
Clothed in eternal ice, a mountain shrouds
Its burning summits in sulphureous clouds;
O'er its vast surface endless Winter reigns,
And Nature sleeps in Frost's benumbing chains;
Snows piled on snows accumulated rise,
And rocks of ice sustain th' incumbent skies:
Within vast floods of fire, through sulphurous caves,
Pour the loud torrents of their molten waves;
Fierce and more fierce the fiery fluid glows,
'Till bursting through the rifted rocks it flows;
In blazing cataracts, its passage rends,
Dissolves th' incrusted ice, and swift descends;
In curling eddies, clouds of vapour rise,
Spread o'er the plains, and darken all the skies.

Here native Discord holds her turbid reign,
And warring elements her rule maintain;
Contentious demons, through the dark abodes,
Direct the boiling streams and fiery floods;
With uproar wild the echoing caves resound,
As dash'd on rocks the molten waves rebound.
Now through dark gulphs, on burning blasts they ride,
And now in air the whizzing meteors guide;
Now, with black clouds, obscure the rising day,
Now gild the night with dim ambiguous ray;
Bid fires infernal from the centre glare,
And wing black tempests through the midway air;
Breathe in each blast their foul mephitic breath,
And scatter o'er the earth disease and death.

Others, with adverse influence ride the wind,
Congeal the lakes, and rapid rivers bind;
Condense the clouds, and scatter fleecy snows,
Where wrapt in smoke the fiery deluge flows;
Rend the firm earth, and ocean's waters pour
Through sulphurous chasms, where fires terrestrial roar;
Bid the vast Gheiser, from its secret caves,
In mounting torrents spout its boiling waves;
Now from the earth's unfathom'd depths arise,
Flash into foam, and glitter in the skies;
And now, retiring from the realms of light,
Sink down absorb'd in gulphs of endless night.

Eternal vapors rise and hover round,
And dews unceasing soak the putrid ground.
 Such are the realms where Discord holds her throne,
Such are the regions which her subjects own.
Rebellious factions, ever struggling round,
Shake her weak empire, and her rule confound;
Disorder triumphs through her wide domain,
And Uproar wild, and fierce Contention reign.
 Oft into realms remote the demons stray
To propagate their sovereign's doubtful sway;
Confusion wild and anarchy to spread,
And bid aspiring tumult lift its head;
To scatter dark distrust; and, from afar,
Shew louring tempests of wide-wasting war.
Where'er they pass, Destruction hovers round,
And Blight and Famine run along the ground;
Hate and Revenge and Cruelty attend,
And sullen Envy, Discord's constant friend.
 In a vast cave, where wandering gleams of light
Just shew the darkness of surrounding night;
On tottering columns raised of shiver'd stone,
Appear'd the wrangling demon's feeble throne.
Beneath, in wild disorder scatter'd lie,
Huge piles of logic, law, and casuistry;
Deep definition still to be defined,
Lest vague conjecture might some meaning find;

Theses by explanations more perplex'd,
And commentaries darker than the text;
Decrees, false canons, articles, and creeds,
With all the nonsense that dissension breeds;
For nonsense ever is the richest source
From which dissension takes its spreading course.
Words in which sense or meaning is contain'd,
When misconceived, can always be explain'd;
And thus fierce disputants be taught to see
Some points or terms on which they may agree;
And even should they still enraged dispute,
With ink, not blood, each other they refute.
But where their metaphysic jargon shrouds
No meaning in impenetrable clouds,
Each dreamer, puzzled in the dark, can view
Portentous visions, and believe them true;
As heavenly truths, his feverish dreams admire,
And guard with argument of sword and fire;
Which serve all parties that in turn succeed,
As mutual martyrs for each difference bleed;
For since in nonsense nothing can be known,
With equal reason, each maintains his own;
And all who dare to differ or oppose,
Considers as his God's and Nature's foes.
Not fame nor empire can such feuds excite,
Or yield to Discord such supreme delight,—

Delight, which from exhaustless sources flows,
As fed on food which out of nothing grows.
Around, the bubbles of wild system fly,
Puff'd with conceit distill'd from vanity;
Of various forms, and magnitudes, and hues,
Their glimmering lights awhile they round diffuse;
Till meeting, as in various ways they stray,
Some loud explode, some silently decay.
As when in shades of night bright flames arise,
Around in myriads swarm the busy flies;
So, as these gaudy bubbles float along,
Unnumber'd spirits ever round them throng;
In adverse parties struggle and contend,
Each other's favorite bubbles to offend;
To guard their own, and, e'en when burst, pursue
The fleeting fragments that elude their view.
These are the souls that lived but to maintain
Captious distinctions and opinions vain;
Who dared, with rash impiety, decide
What Heaven's high wisdom hath to man denied;
Polemic doctors, sophists, and logicians,
Divines, reformers, and mad politicians,
Who here, with adverse fury, ever strive
Their various bubbles, various ways to drive.
Here still, in frivolous and endless broil,
Stout Athanasius and Arius toil:

On turgid sentences Tertullian rides,
And sour Montanus' gloomy bubbles guides;
Proud Cyprian here, and there Novatus rails,
Donatus now, Cæcilian then prevails;
Some, from the Stagirite, stolen arms produce,
Impair'd and blunted by unskilful use;
Others, the stoics' barbed weapons seize,
Perplex with paradox, with quibbles tease;
While Plato through Ammonian tubes supplies
The finer gas by which their bubbles rise.

Behind, in busy throngs, their followers press,
And bawl the louder as they know the less;
Roar out, with noisy zeal and stiff grimace,
Fate and *Free-will*, *Morality* and *Grace*;
Monothelites and Dithelites assail
By turns each other, and by turns prevail;
Some for the *like*, and others for the *same*,
Denounce damnation, or salvation claim.

Here state projectors constitutions plan,
Where spoil and murder are the rights of man;
And brawling Folly, Freedom's triumph hails,
In executions from o'erflowing jails;
There others prove that, prostrate round a throne,
Men, to be blest, should all be slaves to one;
And shew, compress'd in apathy serene,
God's image sunk into a mere machine;

One sordid passion only left to steer
His moral entity, — self-guarding Fear.
Words lose their meaning, sense is lost in sound,
And quibbles e'en its negative confound:
Rage and malevolence become more strong,
As more each combatant is in the wrong;
And turbid passions still extend their sway,
As prejudices quench mild Reason's ray;
Assistant demons, on all sides engage,
Inflame their zeal, and animate their rage;
Their rigid obstinacy firm maintain,
And round them weave the cobwebs of chicane.
Delighted Discord listens, and enjoys
The causeless quarrels and unmeaning noise;
Admires the subtilty of vain dispute,
Which, when refuted, can again refute;
That, e'en 'gainst demonstration, can contend,
And still, though vanquish'd, wrangle without end.
Hither Britannia's angel wing'd his flight,
And first he stood on Hecla's topmost height;
Around survey'd the desolated coast
Where endless fire contends with endless frost;
Then through the dreary gulphs, with swift descent,
To Discord's spacious cave his course he bent.
There, as he enter'd, e'en the demons fear'd,
And, hush'd awhile, his power divine revered;

Awhile the dissonance of quarrel ceased,
And every fierce polemic seem'd appeased;
Suspended was the noise of vain dispute,
And Calumny and loud Invective mute.
 Then from the crowd, with awful voice, he calls
Four chief fomenters of contentious brawls;
Impetuous Wrath, and Envy dark and sly,
And stubborn Pride, and restless Jealousy.
 "Go, baleful ministers of ill," he cries,
"To where yon raven banners flout the skies;
Your rankling poisons o'er the chieftains shed,
And dire dissensions through their squadrons spread;
Each slender tie of faith or friendship rend,
And wide your sovereign's weak misrule extend."
 Obedient to his voice, the demons fly
To happier regions and a milder sky;
Till, with the Danish chief and Mercian dame,
To Eddington and Guthron's camp they came;
There, as his beauteous prize the warrior led
Through the deep ranks, their subtile poisons spread.
Her form each gazing chief with rapture fires,
And Envy fans in each his fierce desires;
Each, as he doating views her blooming charms,
Curses the fortune of young Eric's arms;
And still, as Envy colors Love's delight,
Wrath points its rage, and Jealousy its spite.

But recreant Ceulf first, with kingly pride,
Asserts a husband's right, and claims his bride.
"To me," he cries, "my wedded wife resign,
By every law of Heaven and earth she's mine;
My country's sacred rites have join'd our hands
In wedlock's firm indissoluble bands;
Resign her then, and for her safety, know
How much our gratitude and friendship owe."
Young Eric grasps his sword, and stern replies,
"With this I won, with this I keep my prize;
Nor shall the lovely nymph again be led,
A weeping victim, to a coward's bed;
A coward vile, who basely skulk'd away,
And left her fierce Rebellion's helpless prey;
To suffer basest insults, and atone
For crimes and errors which were all thy own.
This arm then snatch'd her from the jaws of death,
And only yields her with my parting breath;
Come then, the combat if thou darest to try,
Let one possess her, and the other die."
"And is it thus," affrighted Ceulf cries,
"Thou darest a husband's lawful claims despise?
Must I then trust my sole and sacred right
To the uncertain issue of the fight?
No! — to your king, the guardian of your laws,
I here refer my equitable cause;

To him, our proper judge, to him I speed
The sacred title of my love to plead."
" Go then," cries Eric, " to our monarch go,
And thy own infamy and baseness shew;
Through all the camp thy cowardice proclaim,
And be the herald of thy well-earn'd shame.
For me — the brawling contest I disdeign,
By deeds, not words, my rights I will maintain.
Nor shall our monarch see me sunk so low
As e'er to plead against so base a foe.
Hence then, avaunt, and save thy recreant breath,
Or know thou stand'st upon the brink of death."
With fierce disdeign he spoke, while half display'd,
Forth from the scabbard beam'd the deadly blade.
Awed and abash'd the Mercian chief withdrew,
While hisses loud his trembling steps pursue;
But various passions still the crowd divide,
They scorn his fears, yet blame young Eric's pride;
While lurking Envy, nursed by dark desires,
Each rival chief with stifled hate inspires;
Each gazed with rapture on the beauteous queen,
As with dejected air and bashful mien,
Silent in blushing modesty she waits
The doubtful issue of their fierce debates.
Meek and resign'd she seem'd; with frequent sighs
Her bosom heaved, and tears stood in her eyes.

Slowly advancing through the crowd they went,
Until they enter'd Guthron's regal tent:
There, seated on his throne, the king appears,
And Ceulf's specious tale with favor hears;
How he, of all the Saxon kings, alone
Had made the Danish interests still his own;
To them devoted all his care and toil;
For them involved his realm in civil broil;
For them, polluted by his country's blood,
A wretched exile now forlorn he stood;
And all he ask'd, such service to requite,
Was but an injured husband's sacred right.

"Respect your laws, and to these arms restore
My wedded wife, and I require no more;
But, if to lawless lust she's left a prey,
Heaven will the crime in judgments dire repay;
For sure the vows of chaste connubial love,
Though made on earth, are register'd above;
Nor will God's justice, in avenging, heed
Our different worship, or our different creed;
But as his rain and light descend on all,
On all alike his bolts of anger fall."

"And was it then to serve thy friend the Dane,"
Bold Eric cries, "thou fledst the embattled plain?
Was it to guard a king's or husband's right,
Thy fears betray'd us in the doubtful fight?

And was the queen deserted but to prove
The heavenly ties of thy connubial love?
Sire, with this wretch to wrangle I disdeign,
But truth's just cause my sword shall still maintain;
From me then let him hear this short reply,—
That he's a traitor, and his tale a lie!"
Th' assembled warriors for the combat call,
And bid the chief avenge th' affront or fall.
"Ne'er can a charge so foul be heard," they cry,
"But the accuser or accused must die!
Nor shall a wretch thus stain'd with dire disgrace,
Among our chieftains shew his recreant face."
Yet some there were, of no ignoble name,
Who, envying Eric's love and Eric's fame,
Had lent their swords to save the wretch from shame;
But beauteous Ethelinde now raised her head,
And slow approaching, to the monarch said:—
"Ah yet, great king, avert the bloody deed,
Nor let, for me, thy meanest subject bleed;
For me—deserted, exiled, and forlorn,
Inured to sorrow, and to misery born!"
Then lowly kneeling, to her lips she press'd
His sceptred hand, and thus her prayer address'd;—
"Grant me one boon; 'tis all that I shall crave,
Ere sorrow sink me in th' untimely grave;

Ah, let me not again be weeping led
To that ungrateful tyrant's hated bed!
From that detested monster set me free,
And as thou wilt, thy suppliant's fate decree!
Doom me to want, to dungeons, and to death!
And I will bless thee with my parting breath;
But ah! from him this wretched body save,
E'en if its only refuge be the grave!"

"Rise, lovely mourner, rise," the monarch said,
"Nor ruthless force, nor harsh compulsion dread.
While this good sceptre Dania's realms commands;
While victory waits upon these martial bands;
While life's congenial currents swell my veins;
While sense perceives, or memory retains;
Fear not: no power on earth shall e'er control
The free and pure affections of thy soul;
No power on earth with sorrow or disgrace
Shall dare again to cloud that heavenly face.
Then rise, fair princess, to yon tent repair,
And know, thy safety shall be all our care."

As thus he spoke, with grateful smile serene,
Slow from her posture rose the beauteous queen;
And, as she smiled, her opening lips disclose
The dewy freshness of the opening rose;
Whence orient pearls, with purest radiance bright,
In even rows display their lucid white;

Her glistening eyes with vivid lustre blaze,
And meet the monarch's with contagious rays;
Her lovely form, in light attire array'd,
Each graceful gesture to his eye display'd;
Her white, her smooth, her supple hand he press'd,
Sudden his heart th' electric touch confess'd;
He tries to speak, his words half utter'd hung
In lingering accents on his faltering tongue;
Till slow recovering, regal pride suppress'd
Awhile the rising passions of his breast;
Then to the crowd around he waves his hand,
And instant silence waits his dread command.
" Hence to his post let every chief repair,
Ourselves, at proper time, the cause will hear;
Maturely weigh, and finally decide,
As due enquiry shall our justice guide.
Meantime, let due attendance on her wait,
And all the honors due to regal state;
For regal state is hers — in her alone,
A title just to Mercia's realms we own."
Firmly he spoke; his words the chiefs obey,
And each retires where duty points the way;
E'en haughty Eric to his orders bows,
Though louring discontent o'erhangs his brows;
Though dark suspicions in his bosom rise,
And sullen anger glistens in his eyes;

His full black eyes, whose penetrating ray,
In every glance, flash'd terror and dismay.
Slow, like the wounded lion, he withdraws,
When force resistless, rage indignant awes;
When growling grim, with visage smear'd in blood,
To fire and steel he yields his tasted food;
And, turning oft, regains his native wood.
 Cast off by all, to grief and shame a prey,
The baffled Ceulf silent skulk'd away;
And, soon as night its favoring shadows shed,
Disguised and secret from the army fled.
A convent's shades he sought, and shaved his crown,
And lurk'd conceal'd beneath his cowl and gown;
Ceulf no more, but Anselm, soon he sunk
In lazy luxury a perfect monk.
 Th' enamour'd king fair Ethelinda led
To where his slaves the wide pavilion spread;
Obedient handmaids on her orders wait,
And near attends the guard of regal state;
The king officious every wish enquires,
Grants what she asks, and does what she desires;
Tries every flattering, every winning art
To gain her favor, and to move her heart;
While she, in feign'd simplicity serene,
Seems not to guess what his attentions mean;

Or playfully his ardent passion blames,
Yet does whate'er that passion most inflames;
With all the witchery of wanton wiles,
And giddy cunning of seductive smiles;
Entices hope, affection's nurse to prove,
But talks of business when he mentions love.

BOOK THE SIXTH.

BLEST are the patriot's toils, by millions blest,
Each morn he wakes, each night retires to rest,
Transmits the honors that his name adorn
To distant times, and nations yet unborn;
And hears, in fancy's ear, their hearts proclaim
Th' eternal glories of his well-earn'd fame;
While round his consecrated tomb they stand,
And cry, " 'Twas he who saved his native land."
'Tis conscious virtue only can dispense
The gleams that gild the fleeting joys of sense;
Still half the bliss each present good bestows
From memory's store or fancy's fountain flows;
And more than half of all the soul receives,
Reverts in gratitude from what it gives.
 Such bliss now crowns the Mercian chiefs' success,
While grateful crowds their virtuous labors bless;
Instant old Sigebert a council calls
In Ariconium's venerable walls;
Fresh from the toils and dangers of the fight,
The bold assertors of their country's right,

Assembled in the regal palace, sate,
With lawful rule, to calm the troubled state;
But unobserved the knight had rode away,
Whose spear had fix'd the fortune of the day;
And, as the foe was yielding up the town,
Pass'd through the northern gate, to all unknown;
Save to the chief in years and wisdom old,
To whom alone his name and rank he told;
But bade him guard it, till some happier hour,
Might reunite once more their scatter'd power;
Then both together, in th' embattled plain,
With force conjoin'd might meet the slaughterous Dane.
He likewise told him where and when he'd seen,
In humble weeds conceal'd, their lawful queen;
Who, now restored to her paternal sway,
With grateful heart, their service would repay.
True to his trust, the venerable man,
When seated in the council, thus began: —
" Illustrious chiefs, whose swords the sacred cause
Of Law, of Liberty, and Justice draws;
Who, from a vile usurper's impious hand,
Have bravely fought, to free your native land;
Though Heaven hath deign'd thus far your toils to bless,
And crown your virtues with deserved success,
Much yet remains. Still on our frontiers near,
The fierce invader shakes his vengeful spear;

There still, in numbers terrible, the Danes
Their banners wave o'er Britain's plunder'd plains;
Nor is our force sufficient to oppose,
In equal fields, these dire, these deadly foes.
Let Prudence then our want of strength supply,
And patient Skill its slow resources try.
Laborious here awhile employ our powers,
To raise the walls and fortify the towers;
Whate'er defence demands, with watchful care
And indefatigable toil, prepare;
To arms the peasants and the townsmen train,
And rouse each heart its freedom to maintain.
" Then, gallant friends, when fix'd secure our state,
Bold in the field we'll brave the storms of fate;
With temperate valor meet the invader's rage,
And, beard to beard, his murderous bands engage;
Then too, when Victory shall our banners crown,
Our lawful sovereign shall resume her throne;
Gentle Elsintha, Buthred's rightful heir,
In peace the Mercian diadem shall wear;
For Buthred, worn with age, by grief consumed,
On Cambria's confines, lowly lies entomb'd;
Where now his daughter, in an humble cot,
Resides unknown, contented with her lot;
Nor, till expell'd or vanquish'd are her foes,
Her sacred refuge shall we dare disclose.

" Haste then, my friends, let each with zeal prepare
The toils and dangers of the war to share;
Let Ide and Alcimund the walls review,
And where decay'd or fallen, their strength renew;
The citizens to arms while Ella trains,
Let Osbright's skill instruct the rustic swains;
Do thou, good Ethelred, with Offa, try
Our ample stores with plenty to supply;
But, while the rich their treasured hoards resign,
Let not the poor oppress'd in anguish pine;
Let all the rest these needful labors share,
While over all extends my watchful care."

The counsels of the sage the chiefs obey;
Each, to the task assign'd, directs his way.
And as, when first the primrose opening springs,
The clamorous rooks expand their sable wings,
Some round the grove in hovering squadrons fly,
While some, in pairs, their skilful labors ply
To build their pendent nests, and high in air
The cradles of their callow brood prepare;
So, as the busy Mercians rush along,
Some widely spread, some round their leaders throng;
While all alike, with patriot zeal, prepare
The labors, which the state demands, to share.

While thus each valiant chief and loyal thane
His country's freedom struggled to maintain,

The patient king his weary steed bestrode,
And towards Northumbria's distant mountains rode;
Resolved, thus as a wandering knight, to try
What aid those rugged regions might supply.
For though, oppress'd with grief, and worn with years,
In arms no more old Sigifred appears;
His realm a bold and hardy race maintains,
And still untouch'd by War's wide waste remains.
Onward he journey'd, till the third day's sun
Its slow diurnal course had nearly run;
And the faint glimmer of its parting ray
Just shew'd the doubtful solitary way;
Where, deep engulph'd amidst o'ershadowing trees
And beetling rocks, descends the rapid Tees, —
The rapid Tees, from whose dark-eddying stream
No trembling tints of bright reflection beam;
But ever gloomy roars its turbid flood,
Brown as the shadows of th' o'erhanging wood.
Here, as with slow and cautious step he tried
To trace the shallows through the troubled tide;
Sudden a voice exclaims, 'Sir knight, beware,
Nor the unknown dangers of the river dare;
Deep gulphs lie hid beneath its turbid wave,
And the next step may plunge thee in the grave.
The ford is distant, threatening is the night,
Here mayst thou rest till the return of light;

And still attend the royal tournament;
For thither, as I guess, thy course is bent."
The monarch turn'd his head, and lo! appears
A venerable hermit white with years;
To whom he answer'd, "To the court I go,
Though nought of tilt or tournament I know;
But seek your sovereign's service, as a knight
Who would some former favors now requite;
Who with his valiant son, whom all deplore,
Confederate arms, not unrespected, bore.
Perhaps, some comfort to the father's heart,
The son's once valued friend may now impart;
Although I know not what untimely fate
Hath swept him off: — thou canst perhaps relate;
And, in the story of his sorrows, shew
How best I may divert or soothe his woe."
"Alas!" replied the sage, "I know too well
The dismal tale, which yet I dread to tell;
How, by a villain's treacherous arts deceived,
Rash Vengeance punish'd what rash Faith believed;
And borne away in Passion's headlong tide,
The victim of Remorse and Fury died!
While, of each kindred stay and hope bereft,
The sire to solitary Woe is left.
But still, if this sad story can requite
Attention through one lingering hour of night;

The hermit's poor repast here deign to share,
And, for his welcome kind, excuse his fare."
With courteous ease, the monarch bow'd assent,
And to the hermit's lowly cavern went;
Where, at his board, the venerable man
Welcomed his unknown guest, and thus began: —
" Thou know'st, perhaps, how, rivals in their love,
For Kent's rich heiress two young princes strove;
How Aribert, preferr'd, the damsel bore
Triumphant to Northumbria's happy shore;
And how awhile, in mutual fondness blest,
They wedded lived, caressing and caress'd.
" But, gall'd with envy, and elate with pride,
Rejected Othbert still pursued the bride;
The next in blood, Ambition's lure conspires
To swell, with loftier hopes, his fell desires;
The husband ruin'd, and the wife obtain'd,
No earthly wish ungratified remain'd;
Beauty and Empire all their charms unite,
Each greedy guilty passion to excite.
" Of all his snares Matilda's heart apprised,
Yet more abhorr'd him, and yet more despised;
With looks of cold reserve, or proud disdeign,
Repell'd the passion which he strove to feign;
Till, foil'd and baffled, guilt of deeper dye,
Foul lust and worse ambition bade him try.

" Meanwhile from Scotia's hills a lawless horde
Impetuous o'er the northern frontiers pour'd;
And Aribert, to check their wasteful course,
Displays his banners, and collects his force:
His country's call admits of no delay;
He mounts his warlike steed and hastes away.
In silent grief serene, the bride suppress'd
Each anxious fear that trembled in her breast;
To chaste affection gave affection's due,
But loved her husband, and his glory too;
Nor, to indulge her weakness, wish'd his stay,
When duty bade him Honor's call obey.

" A week had scarce elapsed, when Othbert's hand
Prepares the fraud his guilty soul had plann'd:
A page suborn'd the prince's signet stole,
With this he forged secure the fatal scroll;
Which, by a treacherous handmaid's purchased aid,
In secret to the princess was convey'd.
It kindly bade her banish all alarms,
Since full success had crown'd Northumbria's arms;
That while the foes, through various ways pursued,
The vengeful victors weary or elude,
One secret hour of night he now can spare
From toil and blood, with her in bliss to share;
But secret be it, lest the king reprove
The impatient ardor of his youthful love;

'Then, in the darkness of the midnight hour,
Alone expect me from the western tower;
Your chamber open: love shall lead the way,
And here return'd I'll hail returning day.'

"The specious fraud Matilda's heart believed,
And, to her longing arms, her foe received;
Who, sated with the joys and guilt of night,
Strove to escape with morn's first dawn of light.
While yet the princess all unconscious slept,
With silent footsteps to the door he crept;
When lo! it opens, and, what most he fears,
The injured husband's martial form appears!
Who, stung with all the pangs of love betray'd,
Plunged in his guilty heart the deadly blade;
Then furious to the bed polluted flew,
And there the unhappy sleeping victim slew;
Who, just to own her murderer, opes her eyes,
Pities his madness, and unconscious dies!

"Soon truth, discover'd in the fatal scroll,
With deep remorse and horror, froze his soul;
Silent awhile he stood; then thrice he press'd
His wife's pale bleeding body to his breast;
And thrice, with hollow voice, invoked her name,
And call'd on Heaven to justify her fame;
Then, ere the attendants could arrest his hand,
Plunged in his own fond heart the reeking brand;

Still clasp'd her as he fell, then faintly cried,
'Forgive me, Heaven!'—kiss'd her cold lips, and died!"

The hermit paused awhile, by grief oppress'd,
Nor less to sorrow yields his listening guest;
Down both their cheeks the drops of sorrow ran,
Till thus proceeds the venerable man.

"Vain is our sorrow; vain the falling tear;
Vice, though still punish'd, still will triumph here:
Alike the monarch on his guarded throne,
And cloister'd monk, its sovereign influence own;
Nor can the hermit, in his lonely cell,
Secure in innocence and virtue dwell;
To shun contagion, howsoe'er he try,
From self and nature he can never fly;
Unsated passions rankle in his breast,
And vice conceal'd grows worse than vice profess'd.
Most blest are they, whom Heaven permits to go
From this bad world, ere yet its guilt they know:
Severe as are the ills we now deplore,
The hoary father lives to suffer more;
Of son, of daughter, nephew, all bereft,
No staff to prop his tottering age is left;
But still his kingdom's weal demands his care,
And, from his choice, expects a worthy heir;
By whose strong arm, of skill and valor tried,
His son's lamented loss may be supplied;

Whose wisdom may with Virtue guard the throne,
And make his people's happiness his own.
" And now contending chiefs await his call,
And crowd, in glittering arms, his spacious hall.
'Tis said, a venerable wizard's skill
Hath found the means his purpose to fulfill;
A magic spear, of wonderous power possess'd
To try the inmost temper of the breast;
Which, e'en when wielded by the weakest hand,
No strength, but strength of virtue, can withstand.
Since, if one vain desire, or stain of sin,
Lurk unsubdued or unatoned within,
Though mingled virtues may awhile maintain
A shew of contest, it will be in vain;
The stoutest champion to its power must yield,
And headlong fall unhorsed upon the field;
But from the breast that's pure, with strong rebound,
It hurls the chief, who wields it on the ground.
If more than one this proof severe abide,
Then lance to lance the preference must decide."
The monarch smiled and said, " 'Gainst such a spear,
Sure monks, not knights, should in the lists appear;
And even thou, old man, the prize mayst win,
From worldly warriors stain'd with worldly sin."
The hermit smote his breast, and deeply sigh'd,
Then wiped the silent tear, and thus replied: —

" Hark, in the yawning caves and gulphs below,
Where 'midst high rocks th' imprison'd waters flow;
The more confined, the closer pent, the more
They rush in eddies, and in torrents roar;
So, to the cell's or convent's shade confined,
More fiercely rage the torrents of the mind:
Desires unsated, passions unsubdued,
In every secret haunt, can still intrude;
The more we circumscribe their weak domain,
With more despotic sway the tyrants reign;
Busy remembrance lends its ready aid,
Nor suffers e'en a trace of pain to fade;
Collects each vice and folly, and to view
Restores it fresh in colors ever new;
Sits, as th' upbraiding demon of the soul,
Records of guilt and misery to unroll;
With stings of conscience arms each buried sin,
And makes of outward stains a hell within.
Nor thus, in life's last stage of swift decay,
Doth Hope's pale lamp emit one cheering ray;
But as the moth, where flame dispels the night,
Though singed, still flutters round the baleful light,
So round Despair's and Sorrow's forms, the mind,
Though tortured, flutters, keener pangs to find;
Nor looks for aught this wretched wreck to save,
But misery's last receptacle, — the grave.

" Depress'd, disgraced, degraded by the world,
From every social joy and comfort hurl'd;
Betray'd by those whom Nature bids us trust,
Condemn'd by judgments partial and unjust;
I fled the scorn and insult of mankind,
And sought in guilt what virtue fail'd to find;
Then turn'd again, but turn'd, alas! in vain,
Just or unjust, the imprinted blots remain;
And, e'en thus hid from man's insulting view,
Remorse and Hate their victim still pursue.
In vain Religion to my fancy opes
Its boundless stores of everlasting hopes;
Dark clouds of busy doubt still intervene,
And dim in distance sinks the flattering scene;
While earthly passions unopposed pursue
Objects distinct, and ever near in view;
Leisure and solitude augment their force,
And reason shews, but cannot stop their course.
" In vain, with fervent zeal, we fast and pray,
Watch the long night, or toil the longer day;
For, whether fix'd by Fate's eternal laws,
The effect obey its predisposing cause;
Or ruling Providence o'er all preside,
Direct th' uncertain world, and nature guide!
How small, how worthless in the general plan,
Must seem this vain and busy reptile — man!

How poor his faculties; how short his race!
A speck scarce visible in time or space!
His use and purpose but to sweat and toil,
The hungry tenant of a hungry soil;
Or all his weak malignant power employ,
Reptiles more weak and helpless to destroy!
By turns to do, contrive, and suffer wrong,
The curse of base existence to prolong;
Which all would lengthen, e'en while all complain
That lengthen'd being is but lengthen'd pain;
Our boasted reason serving but to shew,
What it were better none should ever know;
Th' inherent miseries of this wretched state,
Decay's swift progress, and impending fate;
All which, kind Nature from her brutes conceal'd,
And, only with despair, to us reveal'd!
" This boasted reason too,—how frail!—how weak!
Each transient fever can its texture break;
And fumes inhaled from vilest weeds that grow,
The god-like attribute at once o'erthrow;
Unripe in youth, and rotten in old age,
It yields by turns to Fear, to Love, and Rage,
To Pride, Ambition, Avarice, and Lust,
The broken tool of every passion's gust;
Now tost in the eddies of the maniac's brain,
Now sunk in the idiot's ne'er to rise again;

It scarce retains a trace of what was given
To mark the Lord of Earth and Heir of Heaven.
" As yon bright bubbles in the moon-beams play,
Now shine in foam, then burst and pass away;
So man's succeeding generations pass,
So sink again in matter's general mass;
Absorb'd in gulphs, or dash'd upon the shore,
Alike they vanish and appear no more.
Retaining still its semblance and its name,
His morbid body never is the same;
But ever varying, as yon river flows,
From birth to death the hourly changeling goes.
Each rippling wave, where lights reflected play,
Just foams and glitters, and then glides away;
Though undiminish'd still the stream remains,
Still fills its channel, and its course retains;
So still our race proceeds from sire to son,
In substance many, though in nature one.
As daily food new matter still supplies,
One part grows vital, and another dies;
Through flux continual ripening to decay,
The man of yesterday is new to day,
Till, worn by use, the frail machine gives o'er
Its feeble action, and supplies no more.
" Thus change perpetual fills life's little span,
In pain to end what first in pain began;

The interval a vision short and sad,
Of folly trifling, or of vice run mad,
In wretches struggling through a sea of strife,
Where life subsists but by destroying life;
Where Nature brings forth only foes on foes,
To feed their vices on each other's woes;
And draw, from day to day, their vital breath,
Supplied by agonies and pangs of death;
Which man, the vilest of the accursed brood,
Inflicts for sport, as other beasts for food.
Can he then claim the care of Powers that guide,
Yon orbs immense through ether's boundless tide!
Is he the image of the Eternal Cause,
Which, through unnumber'd worlds, extends its laws?"
The monarch starting cries, "Rash man, forbear,
Nor tread the path which leads but to despair;
Reason no more where reason must be blind,
Nor toil to seek what man can never find;
But humbly hope that gracious Heaven intends
The best of means still for the best of ends;
That still to each its station is assign'd,
To sentient matter, as to reasoning mind;
Nor more conducive to the general plan
The immortal seraph than the mortal man;
That one just Power extends its rule through all,
Alike attentive to the great and small;

Not less to insects that elude the sight
Than yon vast fountains of eternal light;
That each one hath its post, where each obeys
Its great Creator's will in different ways;
Alike, through partial good or partial ill,
His universal purpose to fulfill;
Although our frail perceptions seek in vain
The means and ends of each to ascertain.

" With creeds and rites establish'd then comply,
Nor seek new lights from dazzling sophistry;
'Tis science vain, which only leads the mind,
From doubt to doubt, through mazes undefined;
Where, subtly toiling only to perplex,
It strains each energy itself to vex;
To analyse its own existence tries,
While unenjoy'd that frail existence flies;
For distant causes, present ends neglects,
And real good, for shadows vain rejects.

" Keep then the beaten track, content to know
No more than what may happiness bestow;
Those social duties which in order bind,
Through mutual wants, the chaos of mankind;
Nor yet suppose that Truth to thee alone,
Through doubtful mists, her fleeting form hath shewn;
Nor all the wise of better times deceived,
Who, more than thou canst understand, believed.

To things within thy reach alone attend,
And study what thy mind may comprehend;
Nor ask, each duty well fulfill'd, to know
What rich rewards God's bounty may bestow:
But, in this simple truth, securely trust,
That Wisdom Infinite is wisely just;
That every boon it gives is still the best,
And those who merit blessing will be blest.
Ask not presumptuous how, or when, or where,
Whether in this, or any distant sphere?
But fill thy station well, and time shall shew
That, more than man can ask, will Heaven bestow;
E'en should'st thou err, 'tis error that will bless,—
'Twill give thee hope, and hope is happiness.
" Quit then these vain researches, and relate
What chance hath hurl'd thee from a happier state;
What foul transgression, or misfortune dire,
Bade thee, unwilling, from the world retire:
For though unknown, a private knight I stray,
My youth hath bask'd in Fortune's happier ray;
And still, should Heaven the cause of Justice bless,
This arm thy wrongs and sufferings may redress."
" Ah no!" the hermit cried: " No power can heal
The wounds inflicted, or the wrongs repeal.
Though medicine may a wasted frame restore,
And Wisdom soothe what sorrows vain deplore;

Though virtuous Patience may at lentgh control
The stubborn passions of the harrow'd soul;
And Time's soft opiate slowly lull to rest
Each pang that rends the love-tormented breast;
No charm or medicine ever hath been found
In Honor's fragile form to heal a wound.
Inflamed and tainted by each breath that blows,
The gangrened ulcer more inveterate grows;
Preys, a corroding cancer, on the mind,
Which daily spreads in tortures more refined.
Nor can the cold oblivion of the grave
The victim of its endless rancor save;
It sticks inherent in his blasted name,
And damns his memory to eternal shame.
There — there alone, if such a place there be,
Where every heart from all disguise is free;
Where souls released in endless quiet rest,
No gusts of passion heave the tranquil breast;
No clouds of care their gloomy shadows spread,
No dews of sorrow Pain and Misery shed;
Can I know comfort, or from Heaven obtain
That justice which from man I've sought in vain!
But, since thou ask'st the doleful tale to hear,
I'll tell it briefly, and with truth sincere.
" Know then, where lofty Skiddaw towering shrouds
His craggy summits with incumbent clouds,

And from his black and shaggy brows distils
The eternal tribute of a thousand rills,
Which in the crystal lakes they form below
Their parent's giant form reflected show,
Two brothers were with different fortunes born,
One to inherit, one to merit, scorn;
From different mothers too, though each a dame
Of ancient lineage and of noble name.
Their father was a thane of some renown,
Who oft in battle had his prowess shewn;
The stepdame's favor, partial to her child,
As Nature will'd, still on my brother smiled;
But if I felt it, honorable pride
Taught me the feelings of my heart to hide.
No feuds of jealousy or hate we knew,
But, firm in friendship, both to manhood grew.
My father loved me most; but still his mind
Was just to both, and, as a parent's, kind.
" Thus did we live, until the invading Danes
Compell'd our monarch to collect his thanes;
When, though impair'd by years, my reverend sire
Shew'd all the ardor of his youthful fire,
His waving banners 'midst his peasants rear'd,
And, bright in arms, between his sons appear'd.
Near our own house we met the embattled foe,
Where Isle's clear streams from Derwent's waters flow;

When lo! the van as to the charge we led,
My recreant brother turn'd his steed and fled.
The foe rush'd in where thus a breach was made,
And breathless on the ground my father laid;
But firm in arms his braver followers stand,
Obey my voice, and emulate my hand;
In ranks unbroken, follow where I led,
And heap the ensanguined plain with piles of dead.
" When Victory crown'd the labors of the day,
In haste I flew to where my father lay;
And on his broken lance and batter'd shield
Bore off his lifeless body from the field.
To meet him at the door my brother came,
And told a tale to varnish o'er his shame:
How, borne by his unruly steed away,
He still had shared the perils of the day;
Had fought with hundreds, — mighty deeds had done,—
And, though unseen, immortal glory won.
His helmet bruised he shew'd, his crest displaced, —
His armour batter'd, and his shield defaced.
The lame excuse I willingly received,
And wish'd his tale might be by all believed.
" But soon we learn'd, the king, amid the fight,
Had mark'd the deeds of each, and seen his flight;
And though our names and persons were unknown,
Each by his arms and ensigns would be shewn;

When due reward and punishment to each
Should others, by severe example, teach.
And here the coward's treacherous arts devise
The means to steal the glory and the prize:
For, wrapt in sleep unconscious as I lay,
He mounts my steed, and bears my arms away;
In which encased, before the king he knelt,
And me accused of all he did or felt:
Told how I fled, and where conceal'd I lay,
Till past were all the perils of the day;
How pale with quivering lip and trembling frame,
I sought my father's roof to hide my shame;
And made his widow'd mother blush to see
Her name degraded to such infamy.
" The tale believed, each courtier's eye can trace
The hero in each feature of his face;
And, equally sagacious, read in mine
The sneaking coward mark'd through every line.
In tears his mother all he utters proves,
And if a doubt remain'd, that doubt removes.
The servile herd, as hopes or fears impel,
Some true, some false, discordant stories tell;
'Till finding Falsehood favor'd and believed,
They all unite, deceiving or deceived;
Obey the interests of the present hour,
And sanction every wrong upheld by power.

" Condemn'd unheard by all, in vain I plead,
In vain assert what none will hear or heed;
In vain the accuser to the combat dare:
My valor is the raving of despair!
The rage of conscious guilt, which feels the stain
Of foul disgrace, and maddens with the pain.
" Thus of whatever sweetens life bereft,
The jest of fools and scoff of villains left;
Cast off by all, deserted and forlorn,
And only noticed by the hand of Scorn,—
The hand of Scorn, whose silent finger shews
Each secret haunt where Misery seeks repose;
And slowly moving, with attraction true
Still points it out to Persecution's view.
In vain to shun or baffle it I try,
I read my shame express'd in every eye;
On every tongue re-echoed, hear it sound,
Or, in more deadly whispers, steal around:
Till frantic grown, I form the desperate plan,
Since man's my foe, to be the foe of man.
The hate of fools I calmly could have borne,
But he deserves who tamely bears their scorn;
The world, whose hard injustice steel'd my heart,
Of its own wrongs at least should bear a part.
" Far to the South, where, desolate and wild,
Hills rise on hills, irregularly piled;

And, from o'erhanging rocks and gloomy caves,
Derwent collects his tributary waves;
A savage band of outlaws fix'd their seat,
High on a craggy rock's secure retreat.
With these I join'd; and soon, both far and near,
The country felt my failing was not fear.
Foremost in deeds of blood I led the band,
And rose, as chief in guilt, to chief command; —
If 'twere command, with ineffective sway
To guide remorseless murderers to their prey;
Unable to restrain, yet forced to lead,
Contrive the means, and yet detest the deed;
To share the beastly revel, sottish joy,
And foul debauch, which Leisure's hours employ,
When coarse Intemperance for awhile suppress'd
The ill-boding horrors of each guilty breast,
And o'er remorse for rapes and murders past
Oblivion for a few short moments cast.

" Thus years of misery slowly roll'd away,
And anxious cares brought premature decay;
My fellows I distrust, myself I hate,
That with such wretches I could link my fate:
The dawning light each morn received my curse,
And the drear darkness of the night was worse;
Till Fortune shew'd one transient smile at last,
And Vengeance short repaid long sufferings past.

" Skill'd in each art by which the crafty rise,
And win from Weakness Worth's and Wisdom's prize,
My brother rose; till wealthy grown and great,
He shines a titled minister of state;
And thus ambassador to Mercia sent,
With proud attendance, near our castle went.
I seized the occasion, and the ambush laid,
Where thickets deep imbrown'd a narrow glade;
And beetling rocks on either side oppose
High ramparts, which the winding pass enclose.
Sudden we rush upon our destined prey,
And many a gaudy courtier prostrate lay.
I seized their chief, who vainly strove to fly,—
Pierced by my sword, I saw the villain die!
My visor open, as he gasp'd in death,
Shew'd him to whom he paid his forfeit breath:
Convulsed and pale, with swimming eyes he view'd
His falsehood's victim in his blood imbrued;
Triumphant on his lifeless corse I trod,
And hail'd the justice of avenging God.
Yes! to my heart that moment still is dear,
Still can its bliss life's dreary voyage cheer;
And glutted Vengeance all its glow renew,
Oft as it rises fresh in Memory's view!
" Yet then, as passion cool'd, reflection stole,
In morbid melancholy, o'er my soul.

With toil, with danger, infamy, and care,
I gain'd but misery darken'd by despair;
'Mid wretches vile, in meanest vices sunk,
Stupid when sober, insolent when drunk;
Sensual yet filthy, greedy though profuse;
Stiff in their faith, as in their morals loose;
Slothful though fierce; though rude yet not sincere;
And brave through want of feeling more than fear.
Worn out at length, of health and peace bereft,
Their impious mansion, unobserved, I left;
A needy wanderer, outcast of mankind,
Dead to the world, and to his fate resign'd;
Till here at last I found, in this small cave,
Hope's, Pride's, Ambition's — but not Misery's grave.
Here heavier still I drag life's lengthening chain,
Through days of sorrow link'd to nights of pain;
For ever laboring from myself to fly,
Still curse the lingering dream, yet dread to die;
As he, whose brain the dog's fell fury fires,
Affrighted flies from what he most desires;
In agony of thirst unceasing burns,
Yet from the quenching draught abhorrent turns.
Pain sternly guards the boundaries of death,
Or who would not at once resign his breath?
Unawed by direr pangs, or direr fears,
Say, who would linger in this vale of tears;

Where unfledged Hope still vainly dreams delight,
While close behind Experience spreads its blight,
To pall the sickening soul, and blast the weary sight?"

The hermit ceased; — though grieved the monarch smiles
To see how passion e'en itself beguiles;
How vain the hopes of him who seeks to find,
In change of circumstances, change of mind.
The proudest tyrant, or the supplest slave;
Ambition's fool, or Interest's sordid knave;
Busy in crowds, or quietly alone;
Low in a cell, or high upon a throne;
To Rage and Vengeance yielding now the rein,
Bewilder'd now in speculations vain; —
However modified by chance or art,
The little actor plays his little part.
Hero or hermit, each is but a name; —
The man remains, in every state, the same.

Reflecting thus, he sunk awhile to rest,
Then with the morning rose, and forward press'd.

BOOK THE SEVENTH.

DARK and mysterious are the ways of Heaven, —
What most we dread is oft in mercy given;
By links invisible its power connects
Preceding causes with remote effects,
And bids each partial ill its judgments send
To general good through winding channels tend.
Had old Northumbria's virtuous son remain'd,
And righteous o'er a prosperous people reign'd;
Long rent asunder by divided sway,
Had England mourn'd, to lasting feuds a prey.
The direful deed, that cut his thread of life,
Preserved his country from long years of strife;
And foulest Lust, with fouler Treachery's aid,
In murder Peace's safe foundations laid.

Yet all unconscious of Heaven's wise intent,
In silent sorrow wrapt, good Alfred went;
Till now the neigh of warlike steeds he hears,
And towering high the regal dome appears;
Before the gates wide-waving banners stream,
And crested helms and glittering corselets gleam.

To try by feats of arms the knights prepare,
Who best deserves to be Northumbria's heir:
With conscious pride and rival hopes elate,
The herald's signal for the lists they wait.
The trumpet sounds, and slow within the ring,
In solemn state, march'd forth the hoary king.
Old as he was, his reverend form appears
Bent and broke down by sorrows more than years:
His haggard cheek, pale lip, and hollow eye,
Shew'd all the excess of sovereign misery;
Yet still indelible remain'd the trace
Of conscious dignity and native grace;
In all the majesty of grief sedate,
O'ercast and darken'd, not subdued, by fate;
For still his lofty mien and gait proclaim
A soul deserving of his former fame.
Near, on a sable steed of eastern brood,
A still more venerable figure stood;
Who bore an ebon lance of wondrous length,
But small and light, and suited to his strength:
A fine-wrought hauberk's links, of beaten gold,
His wither'd frame and feeble limbs enfold;
With hauberk too his head was cover'd o'er,
And his left arm a silver buckler bore;
A velvet mantle, o'er his shoulders thrown,
With glittering stars enwrought in sable shone.

Silent in expectation stood the ring,
Till thus began the venerable king:
" Illustrious chiefs, whom patriot zeal unites
To guard your country, and assert her rights;
Since age and sorrow sink me in the grave,
'Tis yours alone this tottering realm to save.
Of every earthly hope and joy bereft,
To me one painful task is only left;
One object only now employs my care,
To choose, for you and all, a virtuous heir;
One who, with firm, and yet with lenient hand,
May rule beloved, and every heart command;
On justice fix, with vigor guard his throne,
And make his people's happiness his own.
Such was the hapless youth whom now we mourn,
Untimely from his parents' bosom torn;
And, though no bliss to me can life supply,
To leave you blest will make it bliss to die."
Here grief awhile his faltering voice impedes,
Till slow recovering, he again proceeds:
" Dark is the soul of man: no skill can find
Each lurking vice that taints the wary mind;
All human sense can human arts deceive,
And knaves suspect while wiser dupes believe.
But here, to guide frail Sense, indulgent Heaven
A safe criterion to our prayers hath given;

This aged seer with reverent steps hath trod
The sacred land which bore the incarnate God;
Hath communed with his vicar, and hath view'd
The holy cross, which once his blood embrued;
Abash'd the caliph on his impious throne,
And forced the swarthy Moor his power to own.
The ebon lance that arms his better hand,
No strength, but strength of Virtue, can withstand.
Touch'd by its point, the stoutest warrior falls,
If one impure desire his heart enthralls;
If one faint tinge of vice his soul infects,
His sure defeat, the latent stain detects.
Let then each true and valorous knight appear,
Who feels his virtue proof, his conscience clear;
Opposed to such, his spear will back rebound,
And hurl his own weak body to the ground;
But each, who in the contest vanquish'd lies,
Must yield his horse and arms, the victor's prize;
And he who wins the wizard's mail of gold
The sceptre of this ample realm shall hold."
The monarch ceased; the knights with wonder hear,
And they who doubt the effects the trial fear;
Much might be risk'd so great a prize to gain,
But loss of arms was knighthood's deadliest stain.
At length a chief, of strength and valor proved,
Who long through distant climes and states had roved;

And, in the courts of Italy and France,
At many a tournament had tried his lance;
Proudly rode forward, and disdeignful cried,
That he all quacks and conjurors defied;
Whose paltry tricks might gaping fools surprise,
But only move the laughter of the wise.
With this he grasp'd his lance and spurr'd his steed;
The wizard meets him with unequal speed;
But touch'd by th' ebon spear, upon the ground
The boaster's shield and clattering arms resound;
Which by the previous compact forced to yield,
Disarm'd he skulks inglorious from the field.
But fierce and savage from the borders came
A thane of stature high and brawny frame;
Who, bred to violence, thought laws and rules
Were only made for knaves to govern fools;
Religion but a cheat, which priests contrive
To fleece the people that theirselves may thrive.
His only deities — his sword and spear;
Of Heaven or Hell he scorns all hope or fear.
"This travell'd fop by his own heart," he cries,
"Not by the wizard's lance, thus vanquish'd lies;
A warrior's arm shall soon his frauds confound:"
He rushes on, then tumbles on the ground.
Blaspheming loud, he damns the juggler's charms,
And, forced by rival chiefs, resigns his arms.

From where the Clyde, between high rocky shores,
In thundering cataracts descending roars,
A chief, too, came, in confidence secure
His lance the prize predestined would ensure.
A Highland seer, for second sight renown'd,
Had seen him by a royal Saxon crown'd;
And, though the seer before had often fail'd,
Faith over facts triumphant had prevail'd:
Nor would he now, when tumbled on the plain,
Confess the dreamer's flattering vision vain;
For still, as knaves find profit in deceiving,
Deluded fools find pleasure in believing;
And doubtful 'tis which gains contentment greater,
The fool or knave, the cheated or the cheater.
With kindred magic arts then forward came
A wily wizard of far-dreaded name;
Who earth's deep-hidden secrets had explored,
And on the stars through nights of winter pored.
Taught by a Scottish seer, he too could see,
In mystic vision, things which were to be;
Could tell of what complexion, shape, and air,
Would be each neighbour's future wife or heir;
And what the destinies of each design'd,
Though to his own, it seems, he still was blind.
His arms, with hieroglyphic spells enwrought,
A wandering Hebrew from the East had brought;

Except the enchanted spear his self had hewn,
With charmed axe, beneath the eclipsed moon;
And with dire drugs of foul ingredients mixt,
The point's inviolable temper fixt.
Some said, the tall black steed on which he rode
The devil himself had train'd, and oft bestrode;
While others, when they heard the courser neigh,
Said 'twas the devil, they knew him by his bray;
And oft had seen, as he went by at night,
His smoking nostrils send forth sulphurous light.
Far round was spread the wayward wizard's fame,
And high stood expectation when he came.
He mutter'd charms and spells, as he drew near,
Thrice call'd his dæmons, and thrice waved his spear;
But all against the ebon lance was vain;
Touch'd by its point, he tumbled on the plain;
The affrighted rabble shouted as he fell,
And hail'd deliverance from the fiends of Hell;
Whose minister, they thought, with impious sway,
Would force them all his masters to obey;
Expel the saints, their books and relicks burn,
And all their churches into stables turn.
The wizard foil'd, dismay'd were all the rest,
And each the frailty of his soul confess'd;
Except one wandering knight, who long in Spain
Had fought, and many a Moorish chieftain slain;

Whence firmly confident he thought that Heaven
To him its high efficient grace had given;
And that the holy cross, which deck'd his arms,
Could ne'er be foil'd by any wizard's charms.
"Behold," he cries, and shews the emblazon'd shield,
"What oft hath driven Hell's dæmons from the field.
The Pope hath bless'd it, and the miscreant Moor
Hath oft been forced unwilling to adore.
'Twere heresy to doubt: it must prevail,
And every wizard's tricks against it fail."
He spoke, but quickly prostrate on the ground,
His cross-wrought shield of no avail he found;
The outward sign was fruitless, while within
Lurk'd thoughts impure and secret stains of sin.
Yet gaily forth a slender stripling rides,
Who gracefully a dappled steed bestrides;
And seems some royal squire or courtly page,
Of scarcely more than twenty years of age.
His armour seem'd too big, yet firm and straight,
He lightly sat, unconscious of its weight;
His prancing steed a silken fillet rein'd,
And slender was the spear his arm sustain'd;
He claim'd the lists: yet ere he forward press'd,
In gentlest accents thus the crowd address'd:
"'Tis no ambitious hope or vain desire,
That bids my youth to rank and fame aspire;

For should the envied prize of power be mine,
Its weight to abler hands I shall resign;
To his, who most by valorous deeds shall prove
The best pretensions to his country's love;
Who most his zeal and contancy shall shew,
In well-fought fields against the common foe.
" O all ye nobles, knights, and powerful thanes,
See, where in arms approach the conquering Danes!
See, where the tempest, louring o'er your heads,
The awful gloom of plagues impending spreads;
Ah, check its course ere by its rage ye fall,
And one dark cloud of ruin cover all;
See, where your last brave bulwark, ALFRED, stands,
To stop the progress of their murderous bands!
Ah, to his standard yet, though late, repair,
And for yourselves his toils and dangers share."
The admiring circle rings with loud applause,
And all are ready in the general cause;
All bade the youth, the proofs severe, essay,
And if he conquer'd promised to obey.
He spurs his steed, and bids the seer advance,
Then firm and dauntless meets the ebon lance;
The ebon lance recoils with strong rebound,
And lays the wizard prostrate on the ground;
Loud shouts of triumph ring, the youth descends,
And o'er his adversary kindly bends;

When he, unhurt, his lance and mail resigns,
And deck'd in gold the conquering stripling shines;
Yet still conceals his lineage, rank, and name,
Nor takes the prize, but still defers his claim;
While up his visor, and securely closed,
Each anxious glance of prying eyes opposed.
He takes the ebon lance, and leaves his own,
Then cries, "By this I shall again be known;
This in my country's cause my arm shall wield,
Be this our pledge to try the embattled field;
And, when victorious in the last good fight,
Thy promise, king, its service shall requite;
Now all remember yours." As thus he said,
He turn'd his steed, and through the forest fled;
The rival chieftains, lost in wild amaze,
Awhile in silence at each other gaze;
Till slow the monarch raised his hoary head,
And thus to all the admiring circle said:
"Whether some airy form deludes our eyes,
Or missive comes immediate from the skies,
Alike by Power divine the vision sent,
To warn, instruct, and counsel us is meant.
Alike 'tis ours the summons to obey,
And go submissive where it points the way;
Then let each chief his various powers collect,
And to the South their rapid march direct;

And oh! were he, the hero, here to guide,
Your force united, and your course decide;
Would ALFRED come, and all your hearts command,
Thus join'd, you yet might save this sinking land."
" Behold him, then," a voice proclaim'd aloud,
And swift he stepp'd majestic from the crowd;
His visor oped, his manly face display'd,
And thus continuing, to the king he said:
" Yes! generous prince, some kind propitious power
With favor smiles on Britain's happier hour;
And thus spontaneous to one centre draws
A host of heroes to defend her cause.
Whate'er the vision that has thus been sent,
It comes from Heaven, and is in mercy meant;
The voice I thought familiar to my ear,
Such as I oft had heard, yet knew not where;
But thus, by fancy duped, we often find
The sense adopt the impression of the mind.
" For what remains, well are thy orders given,
Swift to fulfill the high behests of Heaven;
Let every heart the glorious impulse feel,
Let Britain's wrongs each breast to vengeance steel;
Point every spear, and sharpen every sword,
And godlike vigor to each arm afford.
Drunk with success, with insolence elate,
The foe unguarded now provokes his fate:

Collected let us seize the favoring hour,
And unforeseen the sudden deluge pour;
Crush them while still exulting o'er their prey,
And sweep the raging pestilence away."
He ceased: both kings embrace, and jointly call
The chiefs to council in the spacious hall:
Their plans arranged, the sumptuous feast they share,
Then homeward to collect their several powers repair.
First, from the northern border, Siward led
A savage troop, in wars unceasing bred;
Inured the clime's worst rigors to defy,
And sleep unhoused beneath its frozen sky;
Through drifted snows to climb the rugged steep,
Or darkling o'er the trackless quagmire creep;
The secret ambush silently to lay,
And watch the winter's night or summer's day.
Their bows and quivers from their shoulders hung,
And at their sides their deadly bills were slung.
Of giant form their aged chief appears,
With strength impair'd, but not subdued by years;
Deep were the scars his furrow'd visage shews,
And Grief disdain'd sat louring on his brows;
While darkly fierce, his eye's unconquer'd fire,
Beam'd stern revenge, and unrelenting ire.
Three valiant sons in former fights had bled,
And three his followers still to battle led;

While one alone, his mother's latest care,
Remain'd the troubles of her heart to share;
To nourish hope, to comfort and assuage
The weak and querulous disease of age.

Where deep and clear the lakes reflected shew
The pendent woods that o'er their borders grow;
Amidst vast mountains, whose white summits rise
Through rolling clouds, and glitter in the skies;
Atwulf collects in arms a hardy band,
Rough as the temper of their native land;
Clothed in the shaggy spoils their valor tore
From many a prowling wolf and acorn'd boar;
The rugged hunters point the ponderous lance,
And regular in close-wedged ranks advance;
For far their chief had travell'd, much had known,
And made the arts of distant realms his own;
With critic eye and learned mind explored
What tactics could in valor's aid afford;
And how each field was lost or won could tell,
Where Moor or Saracen prevail'd or fell.

From where high Ingleborough lifts its head,
And Whernside's base o'er many a league is spread;—
Where deep ingulph'd the spouting waters lave,
In foaming cataracts, the gloomy cave;
While lights, refracted through its fissures, shew
Each brilliant tinge of Heaven's aërial bow;

Where Gordel from its iron cliffs distills
Its springs polluted, and its tainted rills;
Through high o'er-arched rocks and fissures flows,
While pile on pile its dark deposit grows;
And, still collected from its deepest caves,
Forms mounds calcareous 'midst its troubled waves;
Which still, from age to age, increasing rise,
As mass on mass the loaded flood supplies;—
Where Skipton's fount, like ocean's varying tides,
Now copious rises, and now refluent glides;—
Morcar, long zealous in his country's cause,
The pastoral tribes in arms together draws.
In flying troops, they watch their chief's command;
Two missile javelins arm each warrior's hand;
Prepared, as apt occasion shall require,
To lead the attack, or in the rear retire;
Embodied firm in even ranks to go,
Or widely scatter'd, singly pierce the foe.
 From Don's and Calder's rocky shores, too, came,
A race of swarthy hue and iron frame;
Who, bred the earth's dark entrails to explore,
And trace through nature's veins the hidden ore,
Now at their country's call review the light,
And arm their callous hands to share the fight.
A leathern helm each warrior's head defends,
A small round target the left arm suspends;

Thin plates of iron on their legs they brace,
And each right hand sustains an iron mace,
Whose ponderous strokes, in one continuous wound,
Joints, bones, and armour's crackling mail confound.
Young Hengist leads them on, whose patriot zeal
Leaves all life's comforts for his country's weal:
In vain his bride, with Beauty's loveliest charms,
Hangs on his neck, and clasps him in her arms,
With all the eloquence of sighs and tears
Tells her dire dreams and ill-foreboding fears;
In vain her infant babe entreats his stay;
'Tis Honor's call, and Virtue must obey.

From Ouse and Humber's wide extended meads,
Edric a chosen troop of horsemen leads,
Whom glittering steel in burnish'd coats invests,
Whose helmets shine beneath their plumed crests;
Whose pamper'd steeds in pride of plenty prance,
And polish'd silver decks each ponderous lance;
Their sabres' hilts with gold inlaid they wear,
And bright-emblazon'd are the shields they bear:
Alike the warriors, steeds, and arms attest,
A fertile land, with arts and riches blest.
Proud was their leader, in his ancient race,
The royal blood of Vortigern to trace;
And no less proud in splendor to display
The vast revenues of his vassal sway.

From various parts came chiefs of humbler name,
And youthful knights, who singly fought for fame;
Adventurers bold, who sought in arms to prove
True Valor's claim to Beauty's tender love;
For glory, beaming from the batter'd crest,
Then thaw'd the ice of each coy virgin's breast;
And love, which dared in blood-stain'd mail appear,
To timid hearts seem'd ever most sincere.

ALFRED the whole with skilful eye inspects,
Each merit praises, and each fault corrects;
Teaches how headstrong Valor bleeds in vain,
Unless calm Prudence guide and Skill restrain;
How firm, yet promptly yielding to command,
Each rank condensed in even lines should stand;
Together move obedient to control,
And act, impell'd and guided by one soul;
That thus inferior numbers might prevail,
And Wisdom triumph, if their force should fail.

Thus form'd, the embodied host he southward leads,
Still gathering numbers as its march proceeds;
And as the Thames from humble fountains flows,
But still collects new waters as it goes,
Till ere it meets the ocean's swelling tide
Secure vast navies on its bosom ride;
So, as new zeal each patriot breast inspires,
Still, as he goes, the king new force acquires;

Still, as with course oblique he southward tends,
Each town and village loyal succour sends.
Among them Ludulf, Worcester's prelate, leads
A sacred band from Severn's flowery meads;
Uncle to Devon's valiant earl, he came
To share alike his dangers and his fame;
Nor deem'd, while hostile force the land oppress'd,
That age or priesthood justly sanction'd rest;
But now a helmet for a mitre bore,
And steel beneath his sacred garments wore;
And though the frost of seventy years was spread
In silvery ringlets round his reverend head,
With manly grace his steed he still bestrode,
And foremost 'mid the warlike chieftains rode.
Symbols of faith his helmet's rim enclose,
While high above a golden mitre rose,
Between whose forks a winged image stands,
Of him who led to war the angelic bands.
An iron mace, his only weapon, hung
Before him, from his saddle's pommel slung,
And o'er his shoulders his broad buckler swung.
Attendant at his side, in dark attire,
There rode an acolyte or youthful squire,
An exiled child of sorrow, who had late
Implored protection at his castle's gate,
Which ever open to the wretched stood,
And gave the naked clothes, the hungry food.

The youth had told a tale, how hapless love
Had doom'd him thus in distant lands to rove;
And though he begg'd, through diffidence and shame,
To hide awhile his lineage and his name,
Nor yet be call'd on fully to relate
The sad event that mark'd his wayward fate,
The aged prelate in his speech could trace
A tone of dignity and style of grace,
Which bore the genuine stamp of conscious worth,
Sustain'd by rank and elevated birth.
On more acquaintance, too, he seem'd to find
A kindred temper in his feeling mind;
A something which his heart appear'd to own,
In mild affection from a cause unknown;
He therefore bade him on his steps attend,
And be his favorite servant, child, and friend.
 But still, though thus with envied favor blest,
The youth felt sorrow ever haunt his breast:
It lurk'd still in his eye, and mock'd the smile
His lips employ'd their secret to beguile;
Yet prompt and active to obey his lord,
He watch'd each look, and hung on every word;
And knew alike, with diligence and skill,
Each wish and purpose duly to fulfill.
Oft, too, his well-tuned lute he deftly strung,
And many an old and plaintive ditty sung,

Which oft his aged master sat to hear,
And paid the grateful tribute of a tear:
Full sweetly did his voice melodious thrill,
And feeling in his music temper'd skill.
But often lonely by the Severn's side
He sat to view the moon-beams gild the tide,
Or listen'd musing, whilst the loaded bee
Humm'd darkling homeward o'er the dewy lea;
Or, as the beetle twang'd its louder drone,
Dwelt on the deep and melancholy tone;
Or traced the filmy moth, as through the night
It silent wing'd its solitary flight;
Or where the glow-worm glimmer'd through the thorn,
Awaited sleepless the returning morn;
While unobserved the owl's death-boding cry
Scared the dun bat that lightly flitted by;
And e'en the wolf, that near and nearer prowl'd,
By him undreaded and unheeded howl'd.
Yet still distracted was his look and air,
And meditation but eluded care;
One secret sorrow still his bosom sway'd,
Whose sullen rule each mental power obey'd:
Silence and solitude were only sought
To shun whate'er awaken'd painful thought;
And whilst his wandering senses seem'd employ'd,
He scarcely aught perceived, and nought enjoy'd:

In crowded streets all pass'd unheeded by,
While silent moved his lip, and vacant gazed his eye.
In gloomy mood, too often would he pray
To meet the battle with the approaching day;
When Death, in victory o'er his country's foes,
The weary scene of joyless life might close,
And some heroic act at length efface
The stains, his conscience felt, of foul disgrace:
And oft, with folded arms and downcast eye,
He pensive stood, and heaved the frequent sigh;
And mutter'd to himself what none might hear,
And silent smote his breast, and dropp'd a tear;
Till mark'd he started, and composed a smile,
The observer's prying glances to beguile.
In vain good Ludulf, with remonstrance kind,
And holy counsel, strove to soothe his mind;
To trace the secret that corrodes his heart,
And mild Religion's healing balm impart;
For still the blushing youth away would turn,
And cry, "Too soon to hate me will you learn:
Wait but a little; time will quickly shew,
Or death — the secret you may dread to know;
Then o'er my frailty drop a pitying tear,
Nor judge my faults with justice too severe,
Or own, at least, my penitence sincere."

Good Ludulf wept his sorrows, and forbore
To press the painful probe of conscience more:
Time's soothing opiate might assuage his grief,
And godly counsel then afford relief.

Old Sigebert the Mercian force collects,
And ALFRED's swift approach in arms expects:
Where Severn's stream and Avon's mingled join,
Both armies with united hearts combine;
Ambitious each its loyalty to prove,
And rivals only in their country's love;
In equal fight, prepared the foe to brave,
And, front to front, their laws and freedom save.

Their leader, too, though prudent, yet elate,
Resolves once more to try the battle's fate;
And, duly weigh'd each army's various force,
Towards the Danish camp directs his course.

BOOK THE EIGHTH.

'Tis said that, ere matured on Mercy's plan,
Grace had redeem'd the forfeit soul of man;
Of his own vices, deities he made,
And spirits foul, beneath their mask, obey'd.
When selfish Passions with each other strove,
Twas Juno wrangled with her husband Jove;
When subtile Craft enkindled wasteful wars,
'Twas Pallas arm'd her slaughterous brother Mars;
When swinish Luxury wallow'd in its wine,
'Twas jolly Bacchus claim'd his rite divine;
When lawless Love prepared Seduction's wiles,
'Twas Cupid lurking in his mother's smiles;
And when impurer Lust usurp'd his reign,
'Twas prim Priapus with his wanton train.
Then caprine satyrs and lascivious fauns
Danced in the woods, and frolick'd o'er the lawns;
For ever following, with intentions lewd,
The willing nymphs, who fled to be pursued;
While sunk in Superstition's deepest night,
Congenial mortals shared the ungodly rite;

And pamper'd Pleasure, destitute of shame,
Lurk'd under Piety's degraded name.

But when a purer light to earth was given,
And Virtue shew'd her fairest form from Heaven,
Awed and abash'd awhile they skulk'd away,
Yet near conceal'd in watchful ambush lay;
Till soon ambitious Priestcraft raised its head,
And proudly reign'd in meek Religion's stead;
Till mitred hypocrites, with stiff grimace,
Sought worldly wealth beneath the garb of grace,
Worshipp'd their God but to partake his power,
And loved his church, — but only for her dower.

Then bold again the foul luxurious crew,
Disguised in various forms, their pranks renew;
His crook a crosier, Bishop Pan adorns
Some pious husband's forehead with his horns;
Phœbus a pulpit of his tripod made,
And preach'd to Bacchus, who the call obey'd;
Became an orthodox and jovial monk,
Though seldom sober, yet discreetly drunk;
Sang masses for an appetite to dine,
And heard confessions, slumbering off his wine.

A quack and mendicant his offspring prowl'd,
Cured all infirmities, all griefs consoled;
Where'er he came, domestic peace ensued,
Joy gambol'd round him, hush'd was every feud;

While each fond wife of burgher, knight, or squire,
With smiles of welcome greets the jolly friar;
And pleased, each husband hails the godly guest,
Whose presence brings his wearied spirits rest.
A spruce court chaplain then, demure and sly,
Became Jove's errand-bearer, Mercury;
In graver garb thus exercised his trade,
But no less prompt his patron's will obey'd;
Polite and supple ever, and so civil,
He would not willingly offend the devil;
In love and casuistry alike expert,
In this ingenious, and in that alert;
His tongue could equally the object win,
And varnish o'er, or justify the sin;
And, lest his friend should be to merit blind,
He always first-fruits took, and tithes in kind.
The naked nymphs assumed the virgin's stole,
And learn'd grave airs, and looks of self-control;
The fawns and satyrs, deck'd in hoods and gowns,
Conceal'd their pointed ears, and shaved their crowns;
Devout, a mitred abbot reel'd Silenus,
And grave, an abbess veil'd, grew laughing Venus;
Lascivious Cupids, too, became lay-brothers,
And made young vestal graces graceless mothers.
They found receptacles, where each invites
A wanton train of vicious proselytes;

Whose dark disguise of sacerdotal pride
Sours each lewd passion, which it seems to hide;
While Zeal and Jealousy with Pride unite
To raise its heat, and yet put out its light;
Whence e'en the furies such disguises took,
Nor yet their old propensities forsook;
But, on a larger scale, to spread perdition,
Became the founders of the Inquisition.

Hence oft in consecrated walls befell,
What tongues profane have scarcely dared to tell;
What pious fools, by cheating knaves deceived,
Have scarcely, e'en when seen and proved, believed.

Such were the walls which through an opening glade
Their lofty spires and pinnacles display'd,
As slow emerging from deep wilds of wood,
The wearied vanguard of the Saxons stood;
Check'd by their chiefs, lest straggling from the rest
Some plunderers might these chaste abodes molest;
Or lawless lust their chastity assail,
Since soldiers tempted are at best but frail.

Before the gates, as nearer now they drew,
Promiscuous crowds in mute suspense they view;
Who round a pile of wood, prepared for fire,
Await to see some wretch in flames expire.
They ask the cause; the assembled hinds reply,
" 'Tis for a murderess sentenced thus to die:

A novice vile a holy sister slew,
And owns the crime: — but see, she comes in view."
They look, and lo! in sad and solemn state,
Led by two monks, a damsel pass'd the gate;
A lighted taper in one hand she bore,
The other held the sign which all adore.
Slowly she moved with melancholy grace,
And lovely was her form, and fair her face;
Her ivory feet and snowy neck were bare,
And o'er her shoulders flow'd her auburn hair;
Around her waist, close girt, a rugged vest
Of sable sackcloth only veil'd the rest.
Silent was all, save when the solemn bell,
At intervals, repeats the dismal knell.
Serene she seem'd and reconciled to fate,
Till near she saw what forms of death await;
When starting wildly; "Is it thus," she cries,
"You break all promises, all faith despise?
Is this, ye fiends! the calm and easy death
Your vows have destined for my parting breath?"
Unmoved the monks proceed, and bid her try
To join in prayer, and not the church defy:
She spake no more; but raised her eyes to Heaven, —
They chaunt their hymns, that all might be forgiven.
Two ruffians then in iron fetters bind
Her tender limbs, to torturing flames consign'd;

In iron circles gird her slender waist,
And fix her where the central stake was placed.
Meek to their bonds her hands and feet she gave,
Then cried, " O thou ! who died'st this world to save,
Grant me, like thee, these agonies to bear,
And guard me from the guilt of dire despair !
My sins are manifold, though now I die
A victim frail of fraud and cruelty."
Through all the crowd infectious sorrows ran;
They all to think her guiltless now began;
For guilt so foul sure never yet was seen
With such an innocent and lovely mien:
The alleged confession never could be true;
Foul deeds some people did: Heaven only knew.
And now the ministers of Death prepare
To light the pile; the kindling fire-brands glare;
When by his chiefs attended came the king,
And forward pressing, broke the encircling ring;
Then bade the ministers withhold the fire,
Until the cause he duly could enquire.
The ministers their sovereign's voice obey;
Benignly then he bids the damsel say
What dire misfortune or atrocious crime
Had placed her there in youth and beauty's prime.
Slowly the damsel raised her languid head,
View'd him with steadfast eye, then, sighing, said —

" O thou, who once hast snatch'd me from the grave,
My hapless life, ah! wherefore didst thou save!
Why thus preserve me for this dreadful day,
To die, of fraud and cruelty the prey!
No lingering pangs had then embitter'd death,
But one short gasp for ever stopp'd my breath;
No calumnies had doom'd me then to shame,
But pure and spotless still had been my fame."
The well-known voice soon taught his eye to trace
The alter'd features of poor Ellen's face;
To recollect the domes, where late the maid
He left, from Wilton's fatal field convey'd.
In haste he bids his trusty squires unbind
The links of iron which her limbs confined;
" For whatsoe'er thy crime, this punishment
Mercy abhors, and Justice never meant.
Thus free, thy story tell; plain truth relate,
Nor hope from favor, nor yet fear from hate;
Our wish would ever save, but to be just
Our duty is, which sometimes punish must."
The maid replied, " I do not wish to live,
But this small boon let equal justice give;
To hear my story and redeem my fame,
Nor let a world deceived too rashly blame.
For this frail body all that I can crave
Is now the refuge of a peaceful grave;

But heiress to a name unsullied born,
I would not leave it to reproach and scorn.
" When placed by thy kind care in this retreat,
It seem'd mild Innocence's purest seat:
Calm was the night and peaceful was the day,
Our business but to read, converse, and pray;
Our faults confess'd, and absolution given,
Each thought her soul prepared to mount to Heaven;
And Death itself, of its worst sting bereft,
No pang to prey on life's serene had left.
Of our superior was our only fear,
Some whisper'd that they thought her too severe;
And that her zeal for purity was such,
She punish'd faults too often or too much;
But still 'twas holy and religious zeal,
Which sought, in transient pains, our lasting weal;
And from corroding thought and hopeless grief,
Employment, e'en in penance, was relief.
It lull'd the tortures of the mind awhile,
And served obtrusive Memory to beguile;
Whose woe-worn images still haunt the breast,
When void it sinks in solitude and rest.
But ills opposed, each other's force restrain,
And inward sorrow yields to outward pain:
Whate'er attention from without engaged,
The pangs within, at intervals, assuaged;

And, as my griefs were sins, the abbess thought
The speediest cure by penance might be wrought.
" With this she still sage admonition join'd,
And while the body suffer'd, fed the mind;
Said worldly pleasures were a poison'd pill,
Prepared by Satan worldly souls to kill;
Then call'd affections, weakness; passions, worse,
And love, of all, our nature's greatest curse;
With which the tempter baited still his hook,
And many a soul from Faith and Virtue took.
" Unskill'd and friendless, to her I resign'd,
Without reserve, my body and my mind;
For, though some things I did not quite approve,
To think them right successfully I strove;
And, as no guile my simple fancy knew,
No inference oblique it ever drew.
Of Fraud or covert Vice, it never dream'd,
But thought that all mankind were what they seem'd.
Thus self-delusions o'er my soul prevail,
And bid me ask at length to take the veil.
" But sister Alice, who was most my friend,
No sooner learn'd the vows which I intend,
Than privately she ask'd me in her cell
To pass the night, — she something had to tell.
She oft had dropp'd strange hints, and seem'd inclined,
Though dreading, to disclose her troubled mind.

" Anxious I went, and now, when all was still,
Save the hoarse murmur of the passing rill,
And hollow intermitting gusts of wind,
Amid the towers and pointed roofs confined;
With which the screeching owl's discordant throat
Oft shrilly mingled its ill-boding note;
There seated by a lamp's pale doubtful light,
Which glimmering shew'd the dreary gloom of night,—
Thus did she warn me, thus at length relate
The guilt and misery of her present state: —
" ' Ah, lovely innocent! who dream'st in vain,
That happy here we live, and free from stain;
That all is tranquil virtue, love serene,
Ah! soon the veil would shew a different scene;
Here every vice, with which mankind is cursed,
In sordid selfish Solitude is nursed;
Here hate and envy rankle in the mind,
The more malignant, as the more confined;
While Love unknown leaves every base desire
To prey in silence with corrosive fire;
Unsocial Lust usurps Affection's throne,
And broods o'er pleasures for itself alone;
Hypocrisy its pander, Faith its slave,
Employ'd to damn whom it was meant to save.
" ' Where sensual joys with social are combined,
Vice, though licentious, still can be refined;

With warm benevolence of heart can glow,
And seek no bliss but what it can bestow;
In mutual pleasures only find delight,
And scorn to take what it cannot requite:
But here it only wallows in the mire
Of frigid, filthy, selfish, base desire;
And while professing fleshly lusts to cure,
Seeks but their dark indulgence to secure.
In all the tricks of dirty cunning wise,
Some gloss for every sin can monks devise;
Beneath Religion's holy cloak obtain
From profit, pleasure, and from pleasure, gain;
Make even Penitence to sin invite,
And the mock cure the fell disease incite.
Yes! oft these holy mockeries prepare
For real sins: — but babbling tongue forbear, —
Forbear e'en thus in confidence to name,
What guilt now covers with the blush of shame;
Though youth, in conscious innocence secure,
Without upbraiding shame could then endure;
Only to Vice are Vice's features known,
To Virtue all are lovely as her own.
" ' Yon shaven crowns and saint-like looks distrust,
They only cover gluttony and lust;
And well 'tis, too, if murder do not close
The scenes of guilt, which time might else expose;

For oft, an amorous confessor to save,
A pregnant penitent hath found a grave!
Nay — do not shrink — nor hate me when I own,
Thy friend such dangers and such crimes hath known!
But learn that yon grave abbess, whose severe
And holy morals virgin saints might fear,
Wallows in luxury, and, day and night,
Wakes wearied appetite with new delight;
Acts without blushing scenes which, e'en to name,
Would tinge my cheeks, and close my lips with shame.
" 'Enough: good night: — let not their arts prevail,
But shun the perils of the insidious veil;
Think it a frail disguise, contrived to hide
Deceit, and Cruelty, and Lust, and Pride;
Which, rankling in the semblance of Content,
Point all their stings, and all their venom vent: —
Again, good night. Hark! sure some noise I hear:
Ah, happy girl! thou hast not learn'd to fear;
But I the horrors of these mansions know,
What vaults of death, what dungeons gape below;
Where, pent for ever from the realms of day,
The hapless victim weeps her hours away;
Dead to all sense of life, but sense of woe,
The last we lose, although the first we know:
To-morrow will I tell thee more.' This said,
Each on her mat reclined her weary head;

But long, by hideous images oppress'd,
Sleep fled the mansions of my troubled breast;
And when at length tired Nature felt repose,
Fancy its train of direst phantoms shews;
Pale woe-worn spectres flit before my eyes,
And bleeding forms in long succession rise;
Cries indistinct seem faintly floating round,
And distant screams of anguish shrilly sound;
Till starting now — a real groan I hear —
A groan of death! — and close, too, at my ear!
And now, ere yet the heartfelt thrill is o'er,
Click goes the spring-lock of the closing door.
Entranced awhile I lay, then thrice I call
My sleeping friend, — 'twas death-like silence all;
I sought her mattress, — ebbing life was fled,
In lukewarm streams, from her half-sever'd head;
I scream'd aloud, and soon in troops along
The cloister'd vaults the affrighted sisters throng;
Their lighted lamps the scene of death display,
Where, weltering in her blood, poor Alice lay;
Yet warm, though every spark of life was fled,
And ghastly paleness o'er her features spread.
" All wonder much at first, but soon agree,
The horrid deed must have been done by me!
No instrument they saw, but smear'd with blood,
The image of despair and guilt I stood.

The door unopen'd, too, they found; nor near
Did tracks of feet, or marks of force appear;
None else could enter, for the abbess kept
The master-key, nor e'er without it slept;
And sure 'twere impious to suspect a deed
So foul from one so godly could proceed;
The voice, too, that for help had loudly scream'd,
To some the voice of murder'd Alice seem'd;
'Twas shriller far than mine, — they knew it well
Before they knew it issued from her cell.

" With horror petrified, I scarcely try
The dreadful charge to answer or deny;
But, as a transitory vision, view
The bloody scene, and hope the dream untrue.
At length the abbess came; at whose commands
They gyve my feet, and bind my trembling hands;
Then drag me forth, and in a cell immure,
With vaulted roof and iron door secure;
Where left alone, in dread suspense I wait,
Till awful Justice shall decide my fate;
Which soon I learn is on this funeral pyre,
Consumed alive, in torture to expire;
But first more studied agonies must try,
To make me own the deed for which I die.

" My case, indeed, admitted no defence,
But simple vows of conscious innocence;

And, 'gainst strong circumstance, too well I knew,
What credit to such simple vows was due;
My judges I acquit: they could not read
My soul, and judged but as the law decreed;
Although this punishment seems too severe,
For creatures frail to merit or to bear.

" Scarce had I heard the direful sentence read,
When from my cell by two stern females led,
Down winding stairs to deeper vaults I go,
Where none my shrieks might hear, or sufferings know;
Dark dreary caves, through whose substantial night
A pendant lamp diffused its glimmering light;
And just sufficed, in dread array, to shew
All that I here was doom'd to undergo;
Each cruel torture meant to be applied,
If still the imputed murder I denied.
The abbess and two aged monks explain
(For they were there) each instrument of pain;
Engines contrived that man may here excell
In cruelty the direst fiends of hell.

" The horrid preparation froze my soul,
The fear of pain surmounted all control:
I only begg'd some easy death to die,
And bade them dictate, I should nought deny.
Just Heaven forgive me, if, to shun despair,
I shrunk from ills my weakness could not bear!

The holy martyrs' energies divine
In vain I sought; their virtues are not mine;
Yet sure the mercy of indulgent Heaven
Will less require where so much less was given!
" These terms accepted, each with vows profess'd
To beg forgiveness for the crime confess'd.
And if too foul for mercy proved its dye,
Justice its mildest death should not deny.
" The scroll they tender'd me, unread I sign'd,
And in my former cell was then confined.
" Scarce did the morning's orient dawn appear,
When loud the knell of Death assails my ear;
No promises my prosecutors bind,
But thus to torturing flames I am consign'd."
" Though strong the circumstance," the king replied,
" By other means the cause should have been tried.
Some tyrant, void of virtue and of sense,
Hostile to justice, truth, and innocence,
Did this fallacious process first invent,
To seek for guilt by guilt's worst punishment,
And by the body's strength in suffering pain
The secrets of the soul to ascertain.
Soon shall experienced judges try the cause,
And pass the sentence order'd by the laws:
Which through our realm shall rule with equal sway,
And prince and people equally obey.

Till then let each in custody abide
The issue of what justice shall decide."
While yet the maid, descending from the pyre,
Lean'd on the arm of an attendant squire,
A stranger knight, with visor closed, drew near,
Then started back, and couch'd his massive spear;
But seeing ALFRED, with a courtier's grace
He bow'd, and begg'd to hear the piteous case;
Which having heard, he, fiercely looking round,
Indignant hurl'd his gauntlet on the ground,
And cried, " Let him, who dares accuse her, try
With me the combat: I the charge deny;
And further with this arm will here maintain,
That they, who seek her life, her friend have slain!"
A murmur of applause ran through the crowd,
And ALFRED and his chiefs the appeal allow'd;
For though they knew how easily the strong
Might, in such doubtful trials, sanction wrong;
Yet all with prejudice must oft comply,
And grant what juster reason would deny.
A champion, much for strength and courage famed,
The convent kept — Sir Wolfang was he named;
Who long, the captain of an outlaw'd band,
With Rapine, Spoil, and Murder, scour'd the land;
While sordid Luxury, in coarse delight,
Consumed by day the plunder of the night.

Yet, though his deeds were foul his faith was pure,
No schism or heresy could he endure;
Vigils and festivals he duly kept,
And sought some saint's protection ere he slept:
For saints in store his calendar supplied,
By every sympathy of vice allied;
Whose mediation might, in time of need,
For frailer brethren of their sect succeed;
And, through pure faith dispensing heavenly grace,
Each stain of moral turpitude efface.
To churchmen tenths of all he took he gave,
And due oblations made his soul to save;
For frequent masses bountifully paid,
And all the ritual of Rome obey'd;
By which he pardon and protection gain'd,
And now his grateful sword their cause maintain'd:
Though still for pay, since every thing, he thought,
Was worth just so much as the price it brought.
The abbess was discreet, and such a friend
Seem'd born suspected virtue to defend.
Firm was his faith; and then to be too nice
In works, was straining virtue into vice:
Since works were all, if rightly understood,
Bad without faith, and mostly with it good:
The means upon the purpose still depend,
And must be pious for a pious end.

Nor would the most censorious dare to blame
Her zeal a handsome sinner to reclaim.
The robber's charms, indeed, were not refined,
But still had merit of a different kind;
Vast strength of muscle, and a comely face,
Which she preferr'd to elegance and grace.
Sir Wolfang, thus become her own true knight,
Had vow'd, whate'er she did, to prove it right;
And summon'd by the monks and saintly dame,
Now sullenly, with slow reluctance, came;
Since, though for plunder he was prompt to fight,
Nor heeded if the cause were wrong or right,
He never willingly exposed his life
In empty honor's unsubstantial strife;
And would from danger now have kept away,
But for the greater peril of his pay.
He therefore came at the third trumpet's sound,
And took the stranger's gauntlet from the ground.
The crowd beheld, with terror and surprise,
His ponderous arms, and limbs of giant size;
But firm yet courteous, bold but yet serene,
The stranger welcomed him with graceful mien.
" Welcome, Sir Knight: though deadly be our strife,
And pledged for victory stand life to life;
Heaven so befriend my wishes, as to thee
My heart from all malevolence is free;

To thee thy cause is just, if just believed,
And thou an honorable foe deceived;
Yet, ere thou venturest, question well thy mind:
Let no seducement warp, or favor blind;
For if, the accomplice in a murderer's lie,
Thou doom'st that lovely innocent to die,
Hell scarce can furnish, or its fiends invent,
Sufficient torments for thy punishment;
And, though ill-match'd in strength I may appear,
Aided by Heaven, this arm shall send thee there."
As threatening thus with awful voice he spoke,
The foe seem'd startled, and his helmet shoke;
But conscience yielding to disdeign and pride,
He couch'd his ponderous lance, and thus replied:
"I come not here a casuist to debate
Of right or wrong — arms must decide her fate."
They turn their steeds, and both for fight prepare,
When lo! with streaming eyes and flowing hair,
The beauteous maid her champion's steed restrains,
And thus entreats him, while she holds the reins: —
"Ah, stay, too generous — too adventurous youth!
Friend of the friendless — champion of the truth!
Unless, from Heaven commission'd, thou art sent
To punish guilt, and guard the innocent;
With conscience pure, let me to death be led,
Nor bear thy noble blood upon my head;

Reserve thy valor 'gainst thy country's foes,
Nor, for a wretch like me, thy life expose:
A poor weak orphan girl, who from her birth
Hath been a mere incumbrance on the earth;
While thou, a hero born for noblest deeds,
Shouldst thou be slain, thy wounded country bleeds.
Then let me die thus guiltless, free from stain;
I dread not death, although I shrink from pain.
Perhaps this judgment may from Heaven be sent,
To take me to itself, while innocent;
Nor yet untimely think my hapless fate, —
In years 'tis early, in misfortunes late;
Though thus cut off in youth's meridian bloom,
Sorrow hath long matured me for the tomb.
In happier days should aught recall my name,
Ah, then do justice to my injured fame;
Rescue my memory, and loudly tell
That, for another's crime, I guiltless fell."
" Fear not, sweet maid," the stranger mild replies;
" Virtue secure, the force of Guilt defies:
A cause like thine from Heaven derives a charm
With tenfold strength to nerve the warrior's arm;
And if he falls, no terrors hath the grave
For him who dies such innocence to save.
Whate'er the event, one boon at least is given, —
To save thee here, or mount with thee to Heaven;

One truth is also certain — to be blest,
Is to act well, and leave to Heaven the rest:
All that is fit, its bounty will bestow,
And more than this, it suits not us to know.
Good angels guard thee! — Now, Sir Knight, beware:
Or victory or death! Let guilt despair."

He said, and waved his hand; then couch'd his lance:
With rapid wheel the adverse steeds advance;
Against their breast-plates, each of temper true,
The massive spears in shiver'd splinters flew;
The steeds recoil'd: each warrior, with a bound,
Springs from his seat, and lights upon the ground.
They draw their swords; in confidence of might,
Rashly Sir Wolfang rushes to the fight;
Full at the stranger's head he aim'd a stroke,
Which parrying with his shield, the stranger broke;
Again he brandishes aloft his blade,
His lifted arm an opening joint display'd;
Quick to the hilt, his sword the stranger thrust, —
Sir Wolfang reels, and tumbles in the dust!

"Thou hast prevail'd," he cried, "the damsel's freed;
This hand the abbess paid to do the deed; —
Forgive me, Heaven!" To speak still more he tries,
But blood obstructs his throat: — he gasps and dies!

And here, frail man, if lured to Vice's snare,
Take timely warning, and the bait forbear;

To headstrong passion ne'er the deed allow
Which Prudence dares not to the world avow;
Or which fair Virtue's natural guardian, Pride,
Needs ask her foe with treacherous aid to hide;
Since, once entrapt, thou never canst regain
Thy freedom lost, or Guilt's career restrain.
From sin to sin, still forward must thou go,
Obey the fiend, nor yet his purpose know;
Till fix'd at length thou in his trammels lie,
And Heaven's and Earth's rejected outcast die.
Nor e'en can woman's love-created mind,
To soothe each storm of social strife design'd,
Arrest her progress, or repentant pause,
When once she breaks through Truth's and Virtue's laws.
When Shame must hide what Shame hath not withstood,
It flies her cheeks to rankle in her blood.
And, as of Nature's gifts the worst abuse,
To strongest spirit turns the sweetest juice;
So woman's sweetness to strong spirit turns,
When blurr'd her cheek no more with blushes burns;
Nor can the convent's calm retard its course,—
Stagnation feeds and cherishes its force.
Each fiercer passion, pent within the breast,
More fiercely rages, — smother'd, not suppress'd;

And, undiluted by all social joys,
Its silent energies condensed employs.
When nought without can warm affection win,
All fouler feelings effervesce within;
And when her own meek virtues all are fled,
She takes all man's coarse vices in their stead.
Of tender Love, then Lust usurps the place,
Hardens her heart, and fortifies her face;
Whence vice from vice insensibly ensues,
Fraud guides the tongue, and blood the hand imbrues.
Pleasure a venial sin the abbess thought,
And mere concealment to indulgence sought;
Till listening, at the key-hole of the cell,
To all the imprudent nun had dared to tell,
She found that murder then alone could cure
Her wounded fame, and tottering state secure;
And e'en from thence worse dangers might proceed,
Unless some substitute confess'd the deed.
Thus crimes to hide with fouler crimes she toil'd,
Till back her engines, charged with death, recoil'd;
And what her arts for Ellen had prepared,
In milder form she with her champion shared.
Applauding multitudes the victor bless,
Congratulating chieftains round him press;
But chill'd with awe, and silent with surprise,
The blushing damsel scarce dared raise her eyes.

She thought some angel, in his form array'd,
Had from the skies descended to her aid;
And, smit with reverence and religious fear,
All pale and trembling stood, while he drew near,
Then knelt devout: her hand he gently press'd,
And oped his helm; then clasp'd her to his breast.
His well-known features meet her dazzled eyes,—
"It is — 'tis Edwin's self!" she fainting cries!
Pierced and unhorsed on Wilton's fatal plain,
Long stunn'd among the dead had Edwin lain;
Where, from his bosom, foes triumphant tore
The token which from her fond love he bore;
But by a peasant's kind and skilful aid
Restored, and safe to Cambria's coast convey'd,
From Mervin now he leads a chosen band
Of Britains bold, to free his native land;
Blest in this first fair effort, thus to prove
The palm of glory in the wreath of love.

BOOK THE NINTH

When Civil Discord, by divine command,
With desolation smites a guilty land,
Each engine Force employs or Fraud invents,
To stop its progress, but its speed augments;
One cause removed a thousand more supplies,
And factions stifled multiplied arise:
If here subdued, insane Ambition bleeds,
There fiercer Vengeance from its blood succeeds;
With keener hatred foes still spring from foes,
And headlong Fury maddens as it goes.
Thus now through Dania's wrangling camp it raged,
And chief to chief in endless feuds engaged.
With proud disdeignful words and haughty mien,
Young Eric claims the beauteous Mercian queen:
But Hubba bold and Harold wise pretend
The rights of absent Ceulf to defend;
Though each, with treacherous and clandestine aim,
Means for himself the lovely prize to claim.
More clamorous still in discontent is seen
Great Hyngar, brother to the Danish queen;

With sneers and menaces he moves the throng,
And vows his sister ne'er shall suffer wrong;
That, if a Saxon in her place must reign,
His blood shall first the nuptial garment stain;
And though no slave to this vile stranger's charms,
His regal birth, his well-earn'd fame in arms,
Might justly claim her, and not wrong a wife,
Nor stir up jealousy, nor kindle strife.
All of the selfish king alike complain,
Who dares from all the beauteous prize detain;
And in his bosom nurse the secret flame,
Fann'd by the artful and ambitious dame;
Whose passions all to one sole centre tend,—
Love is their means, but empire is their end.
Alarm'd, old Sidroc, Thor's sly pontiff, saw
The stranger's charms the chiefs in factions draw;
And thought, ere yet the poison farther spread,
'Twere best to stop it at the fountain head.
King, chiefs, and people — all obey'd his nod,
And deem'd his word the mandate of his god.
Alone young Eric had presumed of late,
Some doubts concerning rights divine to state;
To scoff at meddling priests, and gaping fools,
Whom groveling Superstition made their tools;
Whence patriot and religious zeal conspire
His vengeful soul with lust of blood to fire.

At first mysterious hints are darkly spread,
Of wrath impending, and of judgments dread:
Of rites neglected, sacrifice denied,
And infidels who dared their god deride;
Of treacherous Christians, who his priests exclude,
While in their places harlots vile intrude;
Whence his accustom'd favor was withheld,
And Mercia lost, and Dania's force repell'd.
Nor could they hope his justly kindled ire
Would only common victims now require:
"No! nought will now avail but human blood,
Some Christians offer'd to the offended god;
And well, 'tis too, if such vile blood succeed,
And no proud Dane to soothe his anger bleed!"
Thus through the maddening multitude he spread
Terrific doubts and superstitious dread:
They throng around his tent, and bid him name
The victim whom the angry god may claim;
He feigns reluctance, but will still abide
By what a general council shall decide.
In general council then the chiefs convene;
And there, when call'd, he names the Mercian queen.
Instant wild dissonance and clamor rose,—
The enamor'd chiefs with rage the priest oppose;
But zealous numbers to support him vie,
And force the king, unwilling to comply.

Then Eric grasps his sword, and furious cries,
" Touch her who dares !" and from the assembly flies.
He seeks her tent, and bids her quick prepare
His fortunes in some distant land to share;
Or, ere to-morrow's dawn illume the sky,
By impious hands on Thor's dread altar die.
Amazed she hears, yet calm and undismay'd,
Accepts with thanks his kind and timely aid;
Girds close her flowing robe to mount the steed,
Then gives her hand, and bids him forward lead:
But ere they yet had pass'd the outward door,
Around in arms the pontiff's followers pour.
His sword, his only weapon, Eric draws,
Resolved to die or conquer in her cause;
But she, who saw that force would now be vain,
Begs him his generous ardor to restrain;
Reserve his courage for a happier day,
Nor throw his life, her only hope, away.
" Let me the arts of feign'd concession try,
And seem, a willing victim, to comply;
A respite I may gain, — then arm'd attend
The unguarded hour, and be indeed my friend."
She said, and slow, while blushing through her tears,
Before the clamorous crowd alone appears;
Silent awhile she stood, then waved her hand,—
Aghast the pontiff, chiefs, and people stand;

While thus she spoke, — " Since then it is your will,
This worthless blood in sacred rites to spill,
A willing offering here behold it given,
And may it, in your cause, propitiate Heaven!
Worn down with ills, and weary grown of life,
With bleeding bosom will I bless the knife;
Silent, while bound upon the altar, lie,
Nor e'en reproach your pontiff with a sigh.
One only boon I ask, — my only prayer,
Is for a few short moments to prepare;
One week's delay, — grant it, and I will try,
Worthy of you, and of your god, to die!
And if you doubt, let me in bonds confined
Await my doom: behold me here resign'd;
To you, dread pontiff, here I stretch my hands, —
Take and secure me, as your god commands."
Thus as she spoke, soft Pity's mild control,
From breast to breast, through all the concourse stole:
Each heart repentant felt her potent charms,
As to the priest she stretch'd her beauteous arms;
And e'en the priest, as he those arms received,
Felt, at her gentle resignation, grieved.
Her prayer he granted, and then silent led
Her trembling steps to where his tent was spread.
There still awhile, to silent grief resign'd,
Upon an easy couch she lay reclined:

Then dried her tears, and loosed her light attire,
And calmly ask'd what forms the rites require:
"What preparation must I undergo?
What previously endure? pray, father, shew
How on the altar you would have me lie:
Ah, grant me but with decency to die!"
The priest assures her, in expressions mild,
She shall be treated as Heaven's chosen child;
With all the indulgence safety could allow,
Or modesty to sex and station owe;
Since e'en the god who claim'd her would be kind
To one so gentle, pious, and resign'd.
"Then shew me, reverend father, shew me here,
How on the altar soon I must appear;
Instruct me, and obedient to your will,
My soul shall strive each mandate to fulfill."
The priest complies, and dallying with delight,
Begins to doubt the expedience of the rite;
Grieves that the week's delay so soon must end,
And thinks what plea its limits may extend:
The god might like her living more than dead,
Or choose some other victim in her stead;
That thus his slave, secure she might remain,
And plot against the public peace in vain.
Meanwhile the king, disturb'd in anxious thought,
How best to save the beauteous princess sought:

He heard that, by her meek submission charm'd,
The frantic rabble's rage had seem'd disarm'd;
And hoped a second council might revoke
The harsh decree, and break the pontiff's yoke;
Or, should the worst befall, his power might stay
The barbarous deed, and lengthen out delay.
But ardent Eric no slow measures please,—
That night he'll perish, or the queen release.
He arms his followers, and collects his friends,
And his pledged honor to their faith commends—
His honor, pledged, by every sacred tie,
To Mercia's queen, their own sincere ally;
" Who now must pay the forfeit of her blood,
Because long faithful to our cause she stood,
And yield her innocent and virtuous life
To an inhuman priest's polluted knife—
A miscreant vile, who dares his god traduce
To every sordid passion's base abuse;
And make fair Virtue's guardian Vice's slave,
And damn by means which Mercy meant to save.
Think not the god such victims e'er desired,
Or spoil and murder from his priests required.
No! Heaven requires of man a soul sincere,
From every sordid, selfish passion clear;
Whose inmost secrets ne'er one thought allow,
Which, free to all, the tongue may not avow;

In native energy and worth secure,
Firmly to act or patiently endure;
Impregnable to pleasure and to pain,
And, rich in honor, scorn all other gain;
Unmoved in danger, open to distress,
And bless'd supremely in the power to bless.
" Such let our priests, as bright examples, shine,
And prove, by virtues, what they teach divine;
Not Hell's worst attributes to Heaven impute,
Their own malignant purposes to suit;
Their own dark envy, eager to destroy,
When lust exhausted can no more enjoy:
The basest passion of the basest heart,
Which every nobler effort seeks to thwart;
And, 'gainst whate'er can claim esteem or love,
Its venom'd shafts of rancorous hate to prove.
" Come, then; and, soon as night's deep shades descend,
Religion's, virtue's, beauty's cause defend;
Protect Heaven's honor, and from murder save
What loveliest to the earth its bounty gave!"
All vow their much-loved chieftain to obey,
And die or conquer, where he leads the way.
And now in darkness, o'er one half the world,
Midnight its dew-bespangled veil unfurl'd;
Which, thicken'd still by low impending clouds,
The slumbering camp in deeper shadows shrouds:

Then silent, and with hidden arms, they went,
And all unseen surround the pontiff's tent.
Bold Eric entering, turns his lantern round,
But none, except its sleeping master, found:
An inward room disclosed an empty bed,
And female garments in disorder spread;
He view'd them near, then fix'd in horror stood, —
The bed and garments were all stain'd with blood;
Some tresses torn he also scatter'd found,
And fetters which the victim's limbs had bound.
He knows the garments — on that very morn,
He saw them by the Mercian princess worn;
The tresses too, though now in blood imbrued,
Were those which oft enamor'd he had viewed;
Were those with which enraptured he had play'd,
As o'er her neck in wanton curls they stray'd.
He press'd them to his lips, and frantic cries,
" Then 'tis too late, — murder hath closed thine eyes!
Wretch that I am! one idly wasted hour
Might yet have saved thee from the villain's power!"
His voice awaked the priest, who call'd aloud:
Within the tent the station'd warriors crowd;
Fierce Eric seized his beard, and furious cries,
" Tell me, fell murderer, where thy victim lies;
Shew me her bleeding corse, ere yet I tear
Thy mangled limbs, for wolves and kites to share!

Know that for tortures I reserve thy breath,
Or here this grasp should be the grasp of death."
The priest astonish'd and affrighted stares,
And mingles protestations, vows, and prayers;
Dragg'd to the bed, all knowledge still denies,
Retorts the charge, and confident replies;
Yet owns his victim had the fetters worn, —
He put them on to keep her safe till morn;
His duty bade him her escape prevent,
And what was done was with her free consent.
" Her free consent! and what consent had she,"
Eric replies, " not dictated by thee?
A helpless victim, yielded to thy hands,
Could she resist her jailor's dire commands?
Gentle indeed, and pliant was her soul,
Serene in wrongs, and patient of control;
And doubtless lay submissive and resign'd,
For thy fell hands her tender limbs to bind.
Perhaps thy lust — inhuman monster, hence!
To where stern Justice waits thy dire offence;
Where all that Cruelty devised with skill,
The bloodiest tyrant's vengeance to fulfill,
Shall all its pangs of lingering death combine,
And every lengthen'd agony refine,
To sink thy soul in tortures great as mine!"

From troop to troop the increasing clamor flew,
And through the camp in general uproar grew;
Demons of Rage and Discord hover round,
And turbulent confusion worse confound.
While thus the shouts of faction echoing ring,
A Saxon minstrel entertain'd the king;
Who heard his harp and songs with such delight,
That all uncounted pass'd the hours of night;
While ancient days he sang and peaceful reigns,
Which once with bliss had crown'd the prosperous Danes;
How then, in peaceful innocence employ'd,
His field's spontaneous produce each enjoy'd;
How firm in consciousness of doing good,
The unguarded monarch 'midst his people stood;
While every subject was his sovereign's friend,
In arms, unpaid, his interests to defend;
Aware that, while he guarded thus the throne,
Its safe tranquillity secured his own.
Such Horda reign'd, the virtuous and the good,
And Wermond wise his people's bulwark stood.
Still grateful millions consecrate their fame,
Who curse the dazzling glare of Harold's name.
Pleased with the theme, the king prolong'd his stay,
Till Discord's clamors drove the bard away;

The camp he traversed, just as orient light
Dispell'd the shades of summer's transient night.
With keen observant eye, as on he went,
A stripling follow'd watching his intent;
Some youthful squire he seem'd, or courtly page
Of scarcely more than sixteen years of age;
At length he nearer to the minstrel press'd,
And thus, in whispering voice, his ear address'd: —
"Minstrel, I know thee; others too suspect;
Withdraw then, nor a friend's advice neglect.
Just now I heard some potent chiefs surmise
Thou wert a spy conceal'd in this disguise:
Remember that thou tread'st on hostile ground,
And traitors too, as well as foes, surround.
Then follow me, — full well I know the way;
But ask no questions, — dangerous is delay."
His words, his accents, and his mien imply
A Saxon not unused to courtesy;
Grateful the minstrel bids him forward lead, —
And both without the camp's wide verge proceed.
The page then lowly kneel'd and kiss'd his hand,
And hail'd the sovereign of his native land;
And grateful thank'd the providence of Heaven,
That to his humble faith the boon had given
To snatch his country's hero from the grave,
And England in her ALFRED's life to save.

" For though in lowly station was I born,
The lowest, loyalty may most adorn;
And still preserved my loyalty hath been,
E'en while a page to Mercia's faithless queen;
Who to a murderer's lustful rage, 'tis said,
The forfeit for her sins at length has paid;
And in some ditch an outcast carcass thrown,
Abandon'd lies, unnoticed and unknown."
He then relates how Thor's inhuman priest
Had claim'd her for his god, an impious feast;
How in his tent she lay in fetters bound,
How disappear'd, and what young Eric found.
Thus communing they onward went till near
On Mendip's brow, the Saxon tents appear;
The youth then pleads excuse: another way,
Not far remote, his parents' dwelling lay;
" An only child, sole object of their care,
Now dangers press, those dangers I would share;
Yet one small boon I ask before I go, —
Some trifling token on my love bestow;
By which, should Victory thy valor crown,
Thy faithful servant may again be known."
" Yes, generous youth," the king benign replies;
" And know, not less than victory shall I prize
The means abundant, empire may bestow,
My gratitude for thy kind love to shew;

Then take this trifle, — 'tis the minstrel's ring:
Should fortune smile, present it to the king;
And, far as sacred honor dares comply,
No boon to thee shall ALFRED e'er deny."

Then to the expectant camp he took his way,
Where anxious fears reproach'd his long delay;
For all unnoticed had he left his tent,
Nor to one friend reveal'd his bold intent;
But when dim twilight spread its doubtful hue,
Disguised and silent from the camp withdrew;
Not moved alone by cares of war and state,
But still more anxious for Elsintha's fate.

The Mercian chiefs in vain their queen had sought;
The messengers no certain tidings brought.
Two trusty thanes old Sigebert had sent, —
They found her gone, but knew not where she went;
Her hosts had miss'd her at the dawn of light,
And knew not whither she had bent her flight.

By turns the monarch's anxious bosom shares
The lover's, patriot's, and the warrior's cares;
And that firm heart, which danger never moved,
Each trembling fear of soft affection proved:
He sees her captured by the foe, and led
By ruffian hands to some barbarian's bed;
Whose lusts, when sated, might their victim send,
On Thor's dire altar, her last woes to end;

And substitute, for Ceulf's guilty wife,
Her pure unsullied bosom to the knife.
Distracted by the thought, disguised he went,
And reach'd unknown the Danish monarch's tent;
Through all the camp his eager search pursued,
Its strength examined, and its weakness view'd;
And, with a soldier's eye and lover's heart,
Survey'd the whole, and studied every part.
At length some Mercian traitors talk'd of spies,
Of harpers strange, and chieftains in disguise.
The page o'erheard them, and in haste pursued
The minstrel's steps, and oft his features view'd;
Recall'd each image left in memory's store,
And strong was this, though seen but once before.
Anxious his self to quit the bloody scene,
Where priests for sacrifice required a queen,
The occasion seem'd by favoring Fortune sent
To urge his speed, and hasten his intent;
For, bred in courts, he knew to save a king
Might rich rewards and princely honors bring;
And if it fail'd, no danger could ensue,
Since courtesy was to the minstrel due;
Nor had a simple page the means to know
What lurk'd conceal'd beneath that outward shew.
The king return'd, his chieftains round him press,
And Heaven's preserving care with thanks confess.

Not the fond mother, who had mourn'd, as lost,
Her son on ocean's distant billows tost,
Through tears of joy, with heart more grateful, smiled,
When Heaven restored the long-lamented child.
Yet, with remonstrance of respect and love,
His too adventurous daring they reprove;
Which risk'd, in duties of the humblest state,
A life whose thread sustains a nation's fate.
But more and more fierce feuds distract the foe,
And adverse factions madden as they grow:
Religious rage embitters party hate
In endless argument and stiff debate;
With obstinacy every breast inspires,
And every brain with frantic fury fires.
" Revenge for rape and murder!" Eric cries;
" Justice for sacrilege!" the priest replies.
Round each, with mutual threats and clamors loud,
Their friends and followers tumultuous crowd;
Till throng'd and press'd, the cause at length they bring
Before the assembled chiefs and anxious king.
The priest opposed his character and age,
When lusts no longer in the bosom rage;
States that, in sleep unguarded as he lay,
These ruffians, arm'd, their strumpet stole away;
On sacred rights with impious fury trod,
And of his victim robb'd the offended god;

Whose vengeance just they now attempt to cheat
With garments stain'd, and fetters from her feet;
As if theirselves, with sacrilegious hands,
Could not have freed her from those easy bands;
Some hairs dishevell'd for deception strew,
And stain the robes, and bed with blood bedew.
" And hadst thou then no guard — no female slave,"
Fierce Eric cries, " a matron's blush to save?
Could none be found to watch a summer's night,
Protect her slumbers, or prevent her flight;
But thou, with thy own impious hands, must bind
Her lovely limbs, too patiently resign'd;
To sate, ere murder mingled them with dust,
Thy fell desires, and impotence of lust?
Who dares defend thy cause I here defy!
This arm shall prove the murder and the lie!
And, did not scorn protect thy trembling age,
E'en here thy heart's base blood should glut my rage.
But vengeance shall be sure. Yes! ever dear, —
Dear still in death, — departed spirit, hear!
By these hot tears, the first these eyes e'er shed,
By these torn tresses, ravish'd from thy head;
By these hard fetters, which thy limbs have press'd,
By this stain'd robe, which clasp'd thy spotless breast;
By all the sacred ties of mutual love,
Whose vows on earth are register'd above!

Revenge for thee shall all my soul engage;
Nor time, nor obstacle, its wrath assuage:
For thee alone this hand the sword shall wield;
For thee alone this arm shall bear the shield;
To thee devoted, hence I draw my breath,
And live, but to avenge or share thy death:
Nor let that monster hope his death alone,
For all he made thee suffer, can atone;
No! long-protracted agonies shall tell
The vengeance that awaits his soul in Hell."
Sternly he spoke, then glanced his eye around,
And hurl'd his glittering gauntlet on the ground:
Silence awhile ensued, then murmurs ran,
In secret whispers spread, from man to man;
But still no champion for the priest appear'd,
Since all, great Eric's strength and prowess fear'd.
The priest, confiding in the people's zeal,
To the full council makes his last appeal;
And Guthron and the assembled chiefs decide,
That both the general judgment must abide;
And that, the laws from outrage to defend,
A guard meanwhile should near the priest attend.
Then Eric march'd away in proud disdeign:
" Since Justice here," he cried, " is sought in vain;
Since Virtue, Truth, and Honor hence are fled,
And basest Fraud triumphant lifts its head;

Since none of life and fame are here secure,
But such as patiently can wrongs endure;
Such as with courtly simper can approve
The murder of what most on earth they love;
Hence from your mean and cringing herd I go,
No more your shame and infamy to know!
Yet, let not Murder think its guilt secure,
Nor deem suspended punishment less sure;
No! dearest object of my heart's last sigh!
Not unrevenged thy cold remains shall lie.
Justice may pause awhile, but ne'er shall sleep,
Till tears of blood that wretch inhuman weep;
And, though no pomp of grief *thy* fall bemoan,
His soul in agonising pangs shall groan."

With this he mounts his horse, and forth proceeds
Where'er the courser undirected leads;
For still of Ethelinde alone he thought,
And onward went, unknowing what he sought;
Unheeding went, in melancholy mood,
Till tired at length the steed spontaneous stood, —
Spontaneous stood before a peasant's gate,
For hunger warn'd him that the hour was late.

A youth stepp'd forth, and ask'd him to alight,
Since tired he seem'd, and fast approach'd the night.
The courteous words, and something in the tone,
Recall'd his sense, and seem'd not quite unknown.

It was, indeed, the youth who ALFRED led,
When both from Guthron's camp together fled;
But still with thoughts disturb'd and transient view,
He scarce observed the image Memory drew.
Yet he alights: the courteous youth proceeds,
And to an inner room the stranger leads;
Then tells him what his former lot had been,
To serve young Ethelinde, fair Mercia's queen;
And, should he want a page or humble squire,
It were a service he should much desire;
And, though in years he might appear but young,
His heart was faithful, and his limbs were strong.

"Ah! name not Ethelinde," the chief replies,
While starting tears stood trembling in his eyes;
"Name not that victim of a monster's hate,
Unless to teach me to avenge her fate;
Some new and cunning cruelty to tell,
Surpassing all that Fear e'er feign'd of Hell;
Whose lengthen'd torments may sufficient prove
To glut the vengeance of Despair and Love!

"Yet, rather say — for well thou must have known,
How still supreme in every grace she shone;
How sweet her temper, and how strong her mind,
How sparkling wit embellish'd taste refined: —
Say all she ever said, and ever did;
Pleased, how she praised thee — how, offended, chid.

Shew me each glance, and each angelic smile,
Whose faint resemblance may my thoughts beguile.
To all, from morn till night, I will attend,
And thou shalt be my brother and my friend;
For, in thy voice and features, now I find
Something which brings her image to my mind."
The youth laugh'd out, and said, " Behold my face,
Perhaps some nearer likeness you may trace."
Then raised his bonnet, and threw ope his breast, —
'Twas Ethelinde in all her charms confest!
Eager the hero clasp'd her to his heart,
And cried, " Thank Heaven! we never more will part.
Ah, dearest Ethelinde! 'twas thine to prove
That bliss on earth can only spring from love;
And mine, despairing, from thy loss to know
That only thine can bliss on me bestow.
Without thee, all the busy world around
One desolate and dreary waste I found;
Life's blossoms all were gone; the sterile tree
Alone remain'd, when 'twas not shared with thee, —
With thee, the magic of whose smile alone
For all its wrongs and miseries can atone;
And shew one model, where my heart may find,
Nor blush to own, its kindred with mankind.
But say, what mercy of protecting Heaven
Thy charms again to this fond heart hath given;

What god from fetters freed thy tender feet,
And led thee safe to this secure retreat?"
" You shall hear all," with playful grace she said;
" But first let me disarm your helmed head,
And, as your faithful and obedient squire,
Take off this ponderous load of steel attire.
There, now no more you chill my heart with fear,
But, as a lover, form'd for love appear;
Then with a lover's heart indulgent smile
On all I did the monster to beguile;
For could I, doom'd to perish by his knife,
Scruple to seize the surest means of life?
I knew thy zeal, but fear'd thy force might fail,
And thought my arts securely might prevail:
A baffled effort would distrust create,
Endanger thine, and fix my hapless fate;
While Flattery and Submission's gentle lure
Might lull the beast, and make him sleep secure:
For poor weak woman, fashion'd to obey,
May sometimes still by feign'd compliance sway;
The strong, the obstinate, and stubborn rule,
And even make the wisest play the fool;
Extend her peaceful empire o'er the mind,
Subdue the valiant, and the lawless bind;
And make her gentleness the means to gain
What force ambitious oft hath sought in vain.

Then, whilst you hear my stratagems, beware,
Nor let me your too generous heart ensnare;
Though sure that heart in sympathy may prove
What mine now feels in gratitude and love.

" When, as a willing victim, I was led
To where his tent pontifical was spread;
I coax'd the hoary fool to while away,
In apish tricks, the remnant of the day;
With feign'd simplicity his sense beguiled,
Indulged his dalliance, and complacent smiled;
Until I fancied I had found the art
To thaw the ice of his obdurate heart.

" At night, within an inner room, undress'd,
My weary limbs a downy mattress press'd;
Whence, if not strictly watch'd, I meant to steal,
When midnight darkness should my flight conceal.

" But left alone, the priest more cool reflects,
And my too pliant promptitude suspects;
A willing victim! he could scarce believe,
And yet I seem'd too simple to deceive.
A guard or watch 'twere safest to employ,
But then his privacy it would destroy.
He wish'd alone his victim to prepare,
Nor let the ungodly holy secrets share;
For thus cajoled, indulged, and yet withstood,
His first design was not to shed my blood.

The whims which his poor doating brain inspired
A plaything, not a victim, now required;
But little better would have been my fate,
Saved by his love, than murder'd by his hate.
Yet, still, in every bitter cup we drain,
While life is left, the dregs of hope remain;
And, form'd to feel each joy it can supply,
No mitred abbot less desired to die.

" 'Twas clear that canvass walls could not withstand
E'en the weak efforts of my feeble hand;
And, in the unguarded silence of the night,
Easy and unobserved might be my flight.
My friends were strong: ' Then fetters on her feet,'
The monster cried, ' will all attempts defeat;
She offer'd to be bound: her faith 'twill try, —
If simple as she seems, she will comply.'

" Thus muttering to himself, he seeks my bed,
Where hopes and fears by turns distract my head;
Excused the intrusion: 'twas his anxious care,
My modesty a needless blush to spare;
But, as a trust committed to his hands,
A public charge, awaiting Heaven's commands,
His duty forced him strictly to ensure
My sacred person, for his god, secure;
And therefore, since I must be watch'd or bound,
He thought the last would least my feelings wound;

My hands he would not offer to confine,
But hoped my feet I freely would resign;
The fetters he had brought were neat and light,
His self would fix them — they should not be tight;
Soft folds of woollen so enclosed the steel,
That its compressure I should scarcely feel;
Nor need my sex's coyness apprehend
Aught that its delicacy might offend;
He only wish'd me to expose my feet,
And would with strict reserve my person treat.

" Aghast I heard with terror and dismay, —
Turn'd on my face, and long in silence lay;
Reflecting that, whichever I endured,
Fetters or guard, I was alike secured;
Of every hope of liberty bereft,
And all alone to his discretion left.

" He waited not for my assent, but spread
His tools and fetters by me on the bed;
In apt position near them took his seat,
Turn'd up the bed-clothes, and exposed my feet;
The gyves with rivets round each ankle closed,
While mute I lay, and nought he did opposed;
For well I knew, resistance or complaint
Would only cause still more severe restraint;
And that, to make him tractable and kind,
The only way was to appear resign'd;

To lull suspicion by a feign'd consent
To all that might clandestine flight prevent.
Yet from his promise pledged he never swerved,
But strict regard to decency preserved.
Perhaps so soon he dreaded to alarm
What lull'd security might best disarm.
" He praised me much, and bade me not despair,
Since yet the god appeased, my life might spare;
And e'en, by my submission won, retain
So meek a handmaid to adorn his fane.
" While thus he spoke, I felt the gyves, and found
Some chance of freedom gain'd by being bound;
For spite of all his pains, through want of skill,
He did his business most extremely ill.
The links, indeed, with folded woollen lined,
Tightly my slender ankles seem'd to bind:
But still the iron circles gaped so wide,
That easily my feet would through them slide.
" Instant a gleam of hope my spirits cheers,
I raised my head, and wiped away my tears;
Then begg'd him to excuse my troubled mind,
Which made me seem so sulkily resign'd:
That light and easy now I found my chains,
Was quite content, and grateful for his pains;
Which left me to indulge my sorrows free,
Alone in undisturb'd tranquillity;

And that, if life was through his favor given,
My gratitude he still should share with Heaven.
" Then, as a pledge to prove my words were true,
I stretch'd my hand: he kiss'd it and withdrew;
Convinced that, like a spaniel, while caress'd,
No wrongs or dangers could my peace molest;
But, to all past and future evils blind,
My grovelling soul was stupidly resign'd.
Indeed, I fancied he might be surprised
To find I liked not to be sacrificed;
For oft doth Fraud its own vile ends defeat,
And makes a dupe where it had meant a cheat.
" Though young, long practised in the storms of state,
I stood prepared for every change of fate.
Wrapp'd round my loins, this page's cloak I bore,
And male attire beneath my kirtle wore;
In which, as near the priest loud snoring lay,
I clothed my limbs, and stole unheard away.
The links uncased, I o'er my heels had slipp'd,
My head too of its flowing tresses stripp'd;
And, to prevent pursuit, I pierced a vein,
And sprinkled all around the crimson stain;
Some ringlets torn too, and in blood imbrued,
I o'er the bed in wild disorder strew'd;
Then tore my sash, and bound it round my head,
And with a minstrel, as his pupil, fled.

" Now Heaven, indeed, its succour deigns to send
In thee, my kind, my best, my only friend.
Exiled, proscribed, of all but life bereft,
In thee my only refuge now is left;
Then take me as thy handmaid, or thy slave,
Each labor will I share, each danger brave;
Give all that Fate hath left me to bestow, —
A grateful heart to feel the love I owe."
Again the hero clasps her in his arms,
And thinks her virtues e'en exceed her charms;
Condemns as slander every vicious tale,
That e'er had dared those virtues to assail;
Convinced that Heaven at length for him had join'd
A perfect body with a perfect mind;
And given a model to the world below,
Its own incarnate attributes to shew.
" Ah! let us shun," he cries, " these troubles vain,
These scenes where Fraud and Vice triumphant reign;
Where knaves and cowards mock the just and brave,
And death alone can envied honor save.
Twelve times in battle have I met the foe,
Nine mighty chieftains hath my spear laid low;
As oft, while to the unequal charge I led,
My bosom pierced by Saxon steel hath bled;
Thrice have I scaled their battlemented towers,
Through clouds of whizzing darts and arrowy showers;

Thrice singly stood upon the captured wall,
And seen opposing hosts before me fall:
Yet wrong'd, disgraced, insulted in my love,
'Tis thus my country's gratitude I prove;
While every gaping fool obeys the nod
Of a vile priest who but defames his god;
And makes religion a mere cloak to hide
His greedy lust, fell cruelty, and pride.

" Hence, wiser grown, we'll Nature's gifts employ
No more to mar her blessings, but enjoy;
This direful trade of blood and death give o'er,
And be Ambition's guilty tool no more;
To watch and toil, while health can strength supply,
And scarcely learn to live before we die.

" Where the vast Elbe, from endless wilds of wood,
Collects the tribute of his ample flood,
And deep and full his curling eddies glide
To meet the boundless ocean's refluent tide,
My father's strong and stately castle stands,
And far around the fertile plains commands.
Though cold the clime; though no Sabæan gales,
With spicy odors, scent the verdant vales;
Nor bending groves nectareous fruits produce,
Nor purple vineyards yield their treacherous juice:
Yet pure the breeze from snow-capp'd mountains blows,
And pure the stream from rocky fissures flows;

Health trains to liberty a generous race,
Glows in each heart, and blooms in every face;
Unnumber'd herds through spacious forests stray,
Supply the feast by night, the chase by day.
In summer's twilight, grateful o'er the glade
The giant oak extends its sacred shade;
Aloft its venerable form uprears,
Rich in the reverence of a thousand years;
While sweet beneath, the purple violet blows,
And mocks the fragrance of the southern rose.
" Thither then will I lead thee, far from strife,
To share in peace the tranquil joys of life;
There will we live to bless and to be blest,
Nor fraud nor force shall more our bliss molest:
The joys ourselves partake shall others prove,
And general gladness hail the reign of love.
Untaught to feign, to flatter, or beguile,
The heart alone there prompts the lips to smile:
Its strong expression knows no base control,
Rude is the character, but speaks the soul —
The soul sincere, as when our race began,
Fresh from the mould of Nature's genuine man;
Ere lawless Power on all her rights had trod,
Or vile Hypocrisy defamed her God;
To make, of Virtue's model, Vice's fool,
And Heaven's best image turn to Hell's worst tool.

" Ere yet the tenth day's sun forsake the skies,
May we behold the wish'd-for turrets rise;
Where still alternate pleasure and repose
Each day shall open, and each day shall close;
While conscious virtue every effort cheers
That soothes distress, and dries affliction's tears.

" Then shall remembrance of our troubles past
A milder tinge o'er present pleasures cast;
Again our souls in sympathy shall melt
At every peril that our loves have felt;
And firm affections, in misfortune tried,
Time's palsying touch unshaken shall abide.
Down life's smooth stream, without one adverse gale,
Thus link'd in bliss together, will we sail;
While still the current's limpid crystals shew
Its bright reflections lengthening as we go;
In every image of the day that's spent,
The pledge of a still happier day present;
Till, tired and sated, from the world we fly,
And in each other's arms together die."

The queen obedient, though not quite content,
With looks of soft compliance smiled assent.

BOOK THE TENTH.

The poorest hind, whose fruitless labor tills
The wildest waste on Norway's frozen hills;
The wretch, who, doom'd to endless night, explores
The depths where Nature guards her noxious ores;
The o'erlabor'd slave, who faint and drooping stands,
In mute despair, on Libya's burning sands;
Alike some lingering fond reluctance prove
To part from scenes endear'd by infant love.
Fair is to each the land he calls his own,
And best to him who hath no better known.
E'en as the mother doats upon the child
Whom most her fond indulgent cares have spoil'd,
And every vice her tardy tears deplore
But makes her love the worthless favorite more;
So, fondly partial to the ungrateful soil,
The native loves it more, the more his toil;
With purer glee its scanty produce shares,
As wearied more with long-expecting cares;
In Fancy's charms, kind Nature still supplies
Whate'er to each her niggard hand denies;

And bids attachment from possession grow
To deserts bare, and mountains piled with snow.
 Could then fair Ethelinde, without a sigh,
Far from her native isle in exile fly;
Forsake whate'er her youthful heart had cheer'd,
All Memory cherish'd, and all Hope endear'd?
No! still on habits fix'd, affections hung, —
To Mercia still her soul enamor'd clung;
Still flattering Fancy shew'd her former state,
And bade her Fortune's fickle favor wait;
While regal pride indignant scorn'd to bend,
And lowly thus to private rank descend;
For humble vassalage forsake a throne,
To live unnoticed, and to die unknown;
Dragg'd from admiring crowds, forlorn and lost
In dreary wastes of solitude and frost.
 Slow as the landscape faded from her sight,
Through parting tears she watch'd the sinking light;
And every object more attractive grew,
As near the hour of separation drew:
Each plant and flower some tender thought awakes,
And lovelier hues from Fancy's mirror takes;
Excites some image in her wavering mind,
With pleasures past or future hopes combined.
And, as the bird, with grief-distracted breast,
Still lingers fluttering round her plunder'd nest;

So still to scenes by tenderest ties endear'd
Her fluttering heart, bereft of all, adhered.
The ocean much she dreads, but dreads still more
The unknown dangers of the distant shore;
Since rude and savage sure must be the brood
Whose fanes and altars smoke with human blood;
Whom e'en their king victorious strove in vain
From rites so dire and impious to restrain,
Invoking every consecrated tie,
To save a queen he loved, their own ally.
Should Thor again a Saxon victim choose,
Would priests or people there her blood refuse?
Or could a private chief defend the life
Of a poor fugitive degraded wife;
Whom e'en his father might with scorn reject,
Or bid the ministers of death select?
Better than he himself, she also knew
The chief, and smiled at what his fancy drew —
Scenes dipp'd in rainbow colors, bright and gay,
Which, with their parent cloud, would pass away,
And leave his restless, proud, ambitious mind,
In cold inaction, stagnant and confined;
Whence moping melancholy soon might prove
A fatal antidote to youthful love;
Which, pall'd and satiated, away would fly,
Or torpid sink, and of repletion die.

The shouts and clamors of embattled fields,
The din of crowded camps and clank of shields,
The whiz of arrows from the twanging yew,
The crash of spears in shivers as they flew,
The tramp and neigh of steeds, the lengthen'd note
Loud echoing from the trumpet's brazen throat,
Had long been music grateful to his ear,
And drown'd whatever softer notes might cheer;
For bright in gales tempestuous blaze the fires,
Whose flame when shelter'd dim in smoke expires;
And gay in combats glows the hero's breast,
Which pines in ease, and languishes in rest.
Yet firm as warm in friendship was his mind,
And, though unhappy, ne'er could be unkind:
This well she knew; but left with him alone,
Or bliss or misery, his must be her own.
Thus, 'midst distracting doubts, at dawn of light
She seem'd prepared and ready for their flight;
Though inwardly her soul sincerely pray'd,
That by some new event it might be stay'd:
And Heaven, indulgent to her wayward will,
Concedes her prayer, its justice to fulfill;
For lo! she sees its minister advance,
In golden hauberk, and with ebon lance —
The spoils which late Northumbria's wizard wore,
Which then the stripling won, and still triumphant bore.

Alone he rode, and, in a garb so new,
Caused some surprise, and much attention drew.
Both gazed astonish'd, as he now came near,
And shew'd his golden vest and sable spear;
Which, like its master, seem'd too slim and light
To joust in tournament, or wound in fight.
Nor less the stripling, with enquiring eyes,
Views and reviews the princess in disguise;
Then Eric thus address'd, "Darest thou, sir knight,
Try, spear to spear, the fortune of a fight;
And this the issue of our contest be,
As fix'd by laws and use of chivalry, —
That, if I fall, my horse and arms be thine;
If thou, thy horse, and arms, and page be mine?"
With courteous mien he spoke and easy grace,
But closed his visor still conceal'd his face;
With scornful sneer the youthful Dane replies,
"Just what I wish'd thou offer'st for my prize:
I only waited to equip my squire,
And what thou bring'st is all his wants require."
He vaults into the seat, and rests his lance:
They turn their steeds, and point to point advance;
But from the ebon lance, with quick rebound,
The Danish champion tumbled on the ground;
Where stunn'd and senseless as a while he lay,
The victor cries, "My time brooks no delay:

Of these his hosts I leave him to the care;
But you, fair squire, must now my fortunes share;
This instant mount your vanquish'd master's steed,
Obey my will, and follow where I lead."
Firmly he spoke; of every aid bereft,
Life's sole resource was in obedience left;
'Twas dangerous to demur, or to complain, —
She mounts, and with him gallops o'er the plain.
Through devious ways with equal speed they press'd
Until the mid-day heats invite to rest;
When near, a convent's hospitable gate,
Wide open, seem'd the weary guest to wait:
The knight declared the abbess was his friend,
So in they ride, and from their steeds descend.
Within the court the stranger told his name,
And to the door the reverend abbess came;
Then through the vaulted cloister courteous led,
To where the hospitable board was spread.
Refresh'd, apart the knight and abbess spoke,
Then by each arm the trembling princess took;
And through a passage narrow, dark, and long,
Conducted to what seem'd a prison strong;
Where close-barr'd windows scarce admit the light,
Through panes prismatic, which exclude the sight.
The knight departs: two aged nuns appear,
Of form robust, and countenance severe.

The abbess says, "This culprit has been sent,
A female thus disguised, for punishment;
A murderess and adulteress here you see,
And long and cruel must her sufferings be.
Then in a garb of penance let her dwell,
A prisoner in her solitary cell;
Till more deliberate counsels shall decide
What further penalties she must abide."
With mute respect the ministers obey,
And first they strip her of her male array;
Then in a hair-cloth frock her body dress'd,
Which round her waist an iron girdle press'd:
Her arms, her ankles, and her feet were bare,
And a hard mat they for her bed prepare.
Entranced awhile with folded arms she stands,
Then cries, "'Tis just: my crime no less demands!
Through every subterfuge of guilt pursued,
In vain I strive Heaven's justice to elude;
At length dead Alfgar's blood for vengeance calls,
And long-suspended wrath collected falls;
Then what I merit let me learn to bear,
Nor sunk in grief, nor harden'd in despair!
Though young, long tried in perils is my soul,
And knows the body's weakness to control.
Thus then with meek obedience I submit
To suffer all that Heaven or you think fit;

Your utmost skill can add but little more,
And with that little, all will soon be o'er."
Her steps then to the narrow cell they led,
While all unused her feet the pavement tread;
'Twas cold and hard: her tender feet were bare,
But sense of pain was numb'd in grief and care;
And with firm step o'er rugged stones she went,
Till in the damp and dreary prison pent.
There long she lay, entranced in wandering thought,
Until her confessor the abbess brought;
With sage instruction, duely to prepare,
Her sinful soul for penitence and prayer.
An aged priest he was, of manners mild,
And conscience pure, but easily beguiled;
Who, all the church decreed, believed, and taught,
And knew no doubts, because no doubts he sought.
Much he discoursed of what might sin efface,
Of intercession, and efficient grace;
Of faith implicit, and of holy love,
And vows and offerings register'd above;
Of souls from purgatory's flames released,
By masses duely purchased of the priest;
Of just atonement here, and compensation
In vigils, fasts, and rigid castigation;
Which, when received, and absolution given,
Might worse offenders qualify for Heaven.

But still in vain his eloquence he tried; —
"I want no aid or counsel," she replied;
"My crimes and frailties have been all my own,
Nor can another for my deeds atone.
If penance here be Mercy's mean above,
Free let the act its own efficience prove;
But if Heaven's justice you yourselves dispense,
Ask not of me to punish my offence.
Exhaust invention, every effort strain,
To weary patience and to sharpen pain;
Till tortures, baffled in their own excess,
Their cruel impotence at length confess;
In this, at least, the sufferer Heaven befriends, —
What nature least can bear, the soonest ends.
One safe asylum, which no strength can close,
Stands ever open to all human woes;
One ever near, though undiscover'd strand,
Invites the storm-toss'd mariner to land;
And none, who seeks to reach that tranquil shore,
Needs linger here: one gasp will waft him o'er.
Nor high-wall'd citadel, nor moated keep,
Nor corbel'd tower surrounded by the deep,
Nor vaulted cell, nor bolt, nor welded chain
Of temper'd steel, can struggling life retain:
The feeblest effort that suspends the breath,
Unbars its passage through the gates of death;

When, bursting from its bonds, the imprison'd soul
Mocks every earthly tyrant's weak control."
Firm in collected pride she strove to speak,
But strong as was her mind, her heart was weak;
And soon the softer tide of sorrow rose,
And sobs and tears awhile relieved her woes.
The hoary priest contagious sorrow felt,
And thrills of sympathy his bosom melt;
For though false doctrines had debased his mind,
Its native texture still was soft and kind;
Their shades alone the clouds of error spread,
But no foul dews of zeal malignant shed:
Perverted reason could from truth depart,
But ne'er pervert the feelings of his heart.
"Whate'er her sins might be," he said, "'twas wrong
To treat thus one so tender and so young;
For though in bodies harden'd by hard use
Such penance might no deadly ills produce,
Yet in so fine and delicate a frame,
'Twas cruel torture with a milder name;
Nay, cruel death; since nature, render'd frail
By soft indulgence, must exhausted fail."
The abbess paused; then said, she would attend
To all his piety should recommend;
But yet, before indulgence could be shewn,
Her sins in full confession she must own.

"To him," the culprit cries, "I will confess,
For bless'd himself with mercy, he can bless.
Yes, holy man! assist me as a friend,
And low to thee my contrite heart shall bend;
Display each shade of guilt that clouds my soul,
And yield each thought to thy benign control;
Let magistrates by equal laws dispense
Their punishments severe for each offence;
But let the priest, who bears God's holy word,
Never exchange the chalice for the sword.
I own my soul, by mad ambition led,
Its lust of power with guiltless blood hath fed;
And if the axe or gibbet yet await
My crimes, but just will be my hapless fate;
But let Heaven's minister benignly come,
To soothe, not aggravate, my mournful doom:
The herald meek of mercy, peace, and love,
Let these proclaim his mission from above;
And gentle charity's refreshing dews
O'er frail desponding penitents diffuse;
Instruct and fortify the sinking soul,
Infirmer nature's vices to control;
From vain desires and terrors free the breast,
Lull troubled thought and busy doubt to rest,
And cheer with hope, when faith with grace hath
bless'd."

As thus she spoke, her gesture, voice, and mien
Display the unbroken spirit of a queen.
Reclining then awhile her weary head,
In silent sorrow, on her rugged bed,
She lay, then raised it with a languid smile,
Which seem'd her heart's affliction to beguile;
And sighing said, "To thy benign control,
Good father, freely I resign my soul:
Weigh all its crimes; then rigidly ordain
The penance due, — my heart shall ne'er complain.
Whate'er this frail and tender frame can bear
My deeds deserve, 'twere wronging Heaven to spare;
And oh! could penance but again restore
Those happy days which these my tears deplore;
Those happy days, when trifles could requite
What then seem'd labor with supreme delight;
And infant Folly, weaker when full-grown,
To hunt a butterfly could scorn a throne.
O, for such days! Could sufferings but erase
From memory's tablet each upbraiding trace;
With tightest bonds my struggling limbs restrain,
While cruel skill enhances racking pain;
Triumphant even in its last excess,
My heart th' inflicter's ruthless hand should bless.
Yet Heaven, I trust, will judge me as a child,
More frail than wicked, less depraved than spoil'd;

Who, form'd for virtue, was to vice allured,
Which still she hated, when she most endured.
" From parents sprung by lawless passions join'd,
No pure example led my infant mind;
No guardian cares restrain'd my giddy youth,
Or shew'd the paths of piety and truth;
But in a gay and vicious court, bereft
Of every guide, an orphan was I left.
My simple charms that flattering court admired,
And royal favor brilliant hopes inspired;
By virtue, or by proud ambition led,
I scorn'd all offers, but the marriage bed.
A titled harlot, had I brook'd disgrace,
In wealth and peace I might have run my race;
Still thrived secure in infamy and ease,
And, safe in meanness, been allow'd to please;
But envy follow'd me, when, blithe and young,
With restless spirits, and with passions strong,
A giggling girl left friendless and alone,
The king enamor'd placed me on the throne.
" His queen deceased from childhood I had served,
Nor e'er from duty and affection swerved:
She loved me much; but, indiscreetly kind,
With graces more than virtues stored my mind.
Her daughter's rival in the court I shone, —
Her beauties awed, while my attractions won:

Of stature lofty, and majestic mien,
And grave deportment, she was born a queen;
While I, a puppet born but to delight,
Was made a queen by Fortune's wanton spite.
" But of some charms, and talents too, possess'd,
A man deserving blessing I had bless'd;
And, join'd to sense and worth, in private life
Had been a faithful, kind, and gentle wife.
Train'd early in precarious Fortune's school,
I learn'd by circumstance myself to rule;
Each passion bent to interest's sovereign sway,
And where I err'd, 'twas reason led astray:
Aspiring reason, used for ends perverse,
Our nature's glory turn'd into its curse.
Power was my favorite object, and how few
Resist that bait, when near exposed to view!
Let those who tempted have resistance shewn,
At frailer sinners only cast the stone;
But let not those, whom want of means kept free,
For what they ne'er can do now punish me;
At least let Justice patiently attend,
And weigh the motives ere it damn the end;
Judge as becomes the ministers of God,
And, cheerfully resign'd, I'll kiss the rod.
Ungrateful if I wrong'd a royal bed,
I ne'er by vice's vulgar lures was led,

And some indulgence surely may be given
To one by strongest provocation driven,
And heiress only to the wrath of Heaven.
" The king was peevish, querulous, and old,
In temper hot, in constitution cold;
He loved me much, but with a morbid love,
Which, craving ever, never could approve:
Its strength was wither'd, its enjoyments flown,
Yet never would the real causes own;
But in its object's failings vainly sought
The change which time had in its nature wrought.
Close at his side he kept me night and day,
Yet nought to please him could I do or say;
Nor seem'd for any end or purpose meant,
Except to move and hear his discontent;
And give him cause of something to complain,
Besides his gout and old rheumatic pain.
Whene'er in sportive humor I was gay,
It was my giddy, giggling, silly way;
When grave and thoughtful — I was sullen, cold,
And discontented with a husband old.
If, anxious to amuse him, I devise
Some serious topic, I was grown too wise;
And wisdom was at best a woman's curse,
And, in a girl without experience, worse.

" The queen deceased now shone with every grace,—
Though, while she lived, he wish'd me in her place,
With such unguarded speech, that some believed
He caused the loss for which he seem'd so grieved:
But memory now recall'd her blithe and young,
In blooming charms, beheld through passions strong,
O'erleaping all that had ensued between
Of languid apathy or froward spleen;
When nought she ever said or did was right,
And my light frolics only could delight;
When all was sense and wit, and every joke,
From me, could laughter and applause provoke;
And every smile or gentle word assuage,
Whate'er the exciting cause, his fiercest rage:
But Hope's illusions Fancy then display'd,
Which, bright in distance, in possession fade.
" Yet not the less at intervals he strove,
In mawkish fondness, to exert his love;
Conceding all that Vanity required,
When Folly prompted, or Caprice inspired:
Though still ungracious, when the fit was o'er,
He blamed the favor done the hour before,
And vow'd tobe a wife's fond fool no more,
But still his dignity and rule maintain,
And prove to all that he knew how to reign.

"Thus yielding ever where he should deny,
And then refusing where he should comply;
Of power jealous, anxious to command,
But wanting strength encroachments to withstand;
He taught me soon by artifice to gain
What humble duty ever sought in vain.
Too soon I found that skillfully to tease
Did more than all my weak attempts to please:
When every flattering, fond caress, had fail'd,
My froward petulance at once prevail'd;
And, only season'd by a frown, my smile
His wayward, restive temper, could beguile.
By basest tricks I always could succeed,
And learn'd to drive him, when I could not lead.

"His children shunn'd me with unbending scorn,—
A widow soon I might be left forlorn;
Too well I saw what then would be my fate,
Abandon'd friendless to avenging hate.
Wise had I been, had I but tried the charm
Of meek respect, their hatred to disarm;
For *wise* and *virtuous* differ but in name,—
Well understood, their meaning is the same:
But pride, inflated by success, despised
What just and prudent counsel had advised;
Let foul temptations lead my soul astray,
And fouler murder prop unlawful sway.

" Yet thus corrupted, had I found a guide
Who had religion honestly applied,
He might have stopp'd me in my mad career,
Allured by hope, or overcome by fear;
But my grave confessors were of a sect
Who social duties in the mass reject;
And only taught me how I might elude
The stings of conscience, when in guilt imbrued.
" One held, that to the church in trust was given
The free disposal of Earth, Hell, and Heaven;
And that its welfare was the only test
Of right and wrong — what served it best was best.
While, firm and pure in faith, its good I meant,
Each doubtful deed was sanction'd by th' intent;
Since all religious, as all moral laws,
Depend upon their object, as their cause;
And, if the cause be good, it must ensue
That all which favor'd it must be so too:
That *loyal*, *grateful*, *generous*, *just*, and *kind*,
Were worldly words for worldly modes of mind;
All which would sinful be, should they oppose
What man to duties more exalted owes:
That Heaven, if duly sought, would still inspire
Whate'er its own true interests might require;
And, if mistaken, offerings might atone,
Bestow'd on those whose interests were its own —

Its ministers ordain'd, who here fulfill
And only know their heavenly Master's will.
" Another bade me trust to Heaven's good grace,
And no reliance on my actions place:
None in themselves were either wrong or right,
But all depended on the inward light;
And they who on their virtuous deeds relied
Were worldly children of conceit and pride,
Who mercy slighted, and God's grace defied:
That greatest crimes oft served the soul to melt,
And cause such light, when given, to be felt;
Its apathy with impulse strong to move,
And wake its energies to faith and love;
Whence, duely fitted for that light divine,
It soon would feel its brightest radiance shine;
And to each action subsequent insure
The sacred virtue of a source so pure.
" Smooth was this teacher's tongue and blithe his face,
His looks proclaim'd a minister of grace,
Who willingly would aid me in the sin
Which was to fit me for his light within,
And reformation's godly work begin.
" O ye whose office is mankind to teach,
Learn for your hearers, not yourselves, to preach;

Nor suffer priestly zeal or selfish pride,
In specious system, sacred truth to hide;
Or, with false beacons of delusive light,
The storm-toss'd soul to certain wreck invite.
Unruly passions are but single ills,—
System its poison in the mass distills;
Of appetite becomes the pimp and guide,
And arms and marshals reason on its side;
Hardens whate'er is sensitive and frail;
And wraps up conscience in its web of mail.
Systems, indeed, in colleges and schools,
May be the playthings of ingenious fools;
Which serve to keep in exercise the brain
Of idle dreamers, innocently vain;
The froth that floats on every buoyant mind,
Whose wandering tides of thought flow unconfined:
But when they on religion's basis stand,
They every moral faculty command;
Pervert each dictate of the head and heart,
And make God's image a mere tool of art
For knavish hypocrites, just as they choose,
In all that base desire suggests, to use;
Infect the streams of which whole nations drink,
And millions in one sea of error sink.
" Thus they who should have nipp'd each sprouting sin
Encouraged all by which theirselves might win;

In holy garb their specious logic deck'd,
That Faith might take what Virtue must reject;
And taught me each dire impulse to approve
Which foul ambition took from lawless love —
From lawless love, which evermore begins
The copious catalogue of woman's sins;
And undermines, in her unguarded youth,
The sacred basis of all virtue, Truth:
Which once o'erthrown, all Hell's suggestions find
A prompt reception in her yielding mind;
And deep and strong infix their cancerous roots,
Whence all that's dire in rank luxuriance shoots,
To form, where all that's gentle owes its birth,
A nest of furies to lay waste the earth.
" Seduced with frivolous and frothy wit,
By one for all that claims respect unfit;
And charm'd with something, which I took for sense,
Yet soon discover'd was but impudence —
That potent gift, which can o'er all prevail,
And thrive where talents, worth, and wisdom fail;
For solid gold its tawdry tinsel pass,
And in the lion's skin conceal the ass;—
Its flowery flippancy, display'd with grace,
A manly form, and an alluring face,
Hath sunk me thus in shame, I blush to own,—
From virtue, honor, splendor, and a throne!

And when my frailty was to vice subdued,
Vice sprung from vice, and crime from crime ensued;
Till, every tender sentiment suppress'd,
Hard, selfish passions, only ruled my breast.
Too true I found that, when we once begin,
We ne'er can fix a boundary to sin:
Light, trivial frauds, some worthless end to gain,
Bring treasons foul and murders in their train;
The *future* still made needful by the *past*,
Each *next* offence finds motives in the *last*,
Till by itself thus gradually beguiled,
To all that's base the heart grows reconciled;
Though feeling still that guilt can never bless,
It damns, exulting in its own success.
Few in extremes are either good or bad;
But all are weak, and vice makes weakness mad;
Deeds, which I once had shudder'd to conceive,
Faint traces of remorse then scarcely leave;
And, form'd by nature gentle, soft, and kind,
When grimed in guilt, obdurate grew my mind.
" The thankless wretch exalted by my love,
Thus made my equal, to degrade me strove;
Scorn'd the base means by which he rose to own,
And claims, from free elective rights, the throne;
Asserts his title, in the people's voice,
The nation's sovereign will, and lawful choice;

To reign sole monarch of the realm affects,
And boasts that meddling women he neglects;
And, pride at once and meanness to display,
Denies the boon he wish'd not to repay.
" But graceful manners and convivial wit,
He found, would not the mind for empire fit.
To act the statesman's or the warrior's part,
Was suited neither to his head or heart;
On others therefore solely he relies,—
On servile ministers, and pension'd spies;
Who their own selfish interests only sought,
And on his fears, to serve those interests, wrought:
Extoll'd the discontents theirselves had raised,
And for their work were amply paid and praised;
Or true or false, intelligence had pay,
Whence spies took care to have enough to say;
In quest of treasons, prowl'd the country round,
And plenty coin'd, where they but little found.
Revolt became the staple of their trade;
They made or bought — then sold it ready-made.
To them he thinks that he his safety owes,
And cherishes, as friends, the worst of foes;
By whom our jails are fill'd, our headsmen tired,
As each new victim others still required:
Each martyr's blood for vengeance calls aloud,
And still new martyrs to avenge it crowd.

Doubts and suspicions every breast invade,
And feign'd rebellions real rebels made;
Till lost was confidence, and terror vain,
And guilt despairing, drove him to the Dane.
Whence, though old Buthred reigning none approved,
He soon became regretted and beloved;
All own'd his latter days had been a curse,
But felt his successor's were ten times worse.
"To me this misery my country owes,
And Heaven just retribution now bestows;
For sure no mortal power directs the spear
Of that strange being who hath brought me here;
Where now to you I unreserved resign
This sinful body — all that now is mine.
Like to the mind it guards, it is but frail,
And, under sufferings too severe, may fail;
Although the contrite spirit wants not will
The rudest penance duely to fulfill."
She said, and stretch'd her hands with lifted eyes, —
The melted priest receives her hands and sighs:
Those supple, soft, and milk-white hands he press'd,
While half uncover'd heaved her whiter breast;
While no less white, and delicate, and neat,
Appear'd below her small and pretty feet.
Her arms extended, to the dazzled sight
Shew'd all their symmetry and surface white:

Plump, round, and taper, aptly turn'd to trace
Each flowing line of elegance and grace;
And elegance and grace were hers, by Heaven design'd,
By Nature fashion'd, and by Art refined;
And, lovely still, in all her face express'd
Each transient sentiment that moved her breast;
Whatever feelings, wandering thought supplies,
Blush in her cheeks, and sparkle in her eyes.
Could guilt so foul to such a frame belong?
Sure e'en her own confession did her wrong!
Such meekness too, — so gentle and resign'd,
Her person seem'd the image of her mind;
The fairest image Heaven had given to man,
Since Fraud and Frailty marr'd Creation's plan.
'Twas impious, sure, in mortals to believe
That such a form was given but to deceive;
And that the loveliest of the human race
Was born her sex and nature to disgrace!
If doom'd to suffer, e'en for crimes confess'd,
What hand could execute the dire behest?
What monster, harden'd in unnatural sin,
Could wound or lacerate that lucid skin;
Or hear that voice in agony of pain,
Or see that face for mercy sue in vain?
E'en hell's worst fiends, who live but to torment,
Would curse their office, and in tears relent.

Thus mused the priest, while love-born pity ran
Through every nerve, and proved him but a man.
Sweet sexual sympathy, by Heaven design'd
Contentious Nature in soft links to bind!
Howe'er thy foul abuses we may blame,
'Tis thine alone our savage hearts to tame;
'Tis thine alone to quench blood-thirsty zeal,
And teach the persecuting saint to feel;
By thee are blended, soften'd, and refined,
Those jarring elements we call the mind;
Each fiercer passion that the bosom sways
Thy mild, congenial influence, obeys;
Ambition, envy, avarice, and pride,
Absorb'd in thy more potent charm, subside:
With love through all diffusing joy and life,
Thou lull'st the storms and heal'st the wounds of strife.
Whate'er in swarms o'er earth's vast surface creep,
Or float in shoals amidst the boundless deep;
What wing the ambient air, or prowl the wood,
For wanton slaughter, or for needful food;
Though rage and hunger madden in despair,
All will the females of their species spare;
All, but the worst of beasts, corrupted man,
In whom unnatural cruelty began;
To whose perverted and degenerate mind
Unnatural vices still remain confined.

Where'er no sexual instincts interpose,
Superior gifts still make inferiors foes;
And deadliest ever are the wars they wage,
When superstition animates their rage.
Hence, though the confessor entreats to spare,
The abbess still was rigidly severe,
And only granted to their joint request,
That as a nun the princess should be dress'd;
And unmolested in her cell abide,
Till just authority her case decide.

Meanwhile, as life to Eric's breast return'd,
His baffled soul with rage indignant burn'd:
Not more infuriate raves the Russian bear,
Whose young are taken in the hunter's snare;
Not more solicitous or fierce she tries
To trace the track by which the hunter flies;
Though even, if their devious course he knew,
'Twere vain on foot their horses to pursue.
Much he enquired; then, long entranced in thought,
The strange adventure's cause and object sought;
Whether from hell the queer magician came
To quench and punish his unlawful flame;
Or by old Sidroc's witchcraft had been sent
To bring again the victim to his tent.
Anxious he ask'd, if grieved and forced she fled —
What cries she utter'd, and what tears she shed.

His host no cries had heard, no tears had seen, —
" She seem'd unwilling, but was still serene;
The victor's order silently obey'd,
Not much afflicted, nor yet much afraid."
" Alas! sir knight," he adds, " thy grief restrain,
Nor anxious seek what all must seek in vain;
For vain and fruitless will his labor prove
Who builds his happiness on woman's love;
Or think such soft materials so to mould
As e'er one form or image long to hold.
But listen, and a tale I'll tell shall shew
What dire disasters from such follies flow;
And shouldst thou still determine to pursue
This wandering phantom, and the joust renew,
Shall also shew thee one who wears such arms
As, canst thou win them, may resist his charms."
With eager looks the hero raised his head,
When thus his courteous host proceeding, said: —
" Where yonder turrets crown the rustic fane,
There lived the heiress of a worthy thane,
Whose orphan beauty, through the country round,
When first it opening bloom'd, became renown'd;
And many a noble suitor urged his claim,
And potent chieftains e'en from Cambria came.
But yon proud castle's lord her choice directs,
And for himself th' unwilling prize selects;

In vile disgrace to waste her wretched life, —
His lust's sad victim, not his wedded wife.
High on a rock, which far around commands
The refluent Severn's shores, the fortress stands;
Where many a captive dame, in bondage kept,
His ruthless rule in silent sorrow wept;
And doom'd were Bertha's charms to swell his store,
And Beauty's fatal gift till death deplore:
For, clothed in hauberk, forged by Merlin's hand,
His breast all earthly weapons could withstand;
And as no force his magic mail could rend,
So none his magic spear could break or bend;
Nor e'er unarm'd his bosom was exposed,
Till in his castle's guarded tower enclosed.
Successive lovers to defend her try,
But, vanquish'd, each had left her to comply;
When humble Hubald found at length the art
To save her honor, and to win her heart.
" A youth he was of visage fresh and fair,
Her father's faithful vassal's orphan heir,
Who oft attendant on her suitors came,
And all unconscious nursed a secret flame;
But only to fulfill his duty strove,
Nor to his own fond heart avow'd his love,
Till, as he saw her forced and captive led
To grace a lustful tyrant's lawless bed,

He boldly offer'd, as her female slave,
To go and perish, or her honor save.
Soft tears of joy his daring scheme approve,
And Hope rewards him in a smile of love.

" Thus through the tyrant's guarded gates they went,
Thus in his tower together were they pent:
Disguised, young Hubald as a handmaid led
His captive lady to the monster's bed;
But as with lustful grin her hand he press'd,
With his own sword he pierced his hated breast.
Then in his armour clad, which near him lay,
Bore, undiscover'd, the dear nymph away;
Whose gratitude upon his love bestow'd
Those virgin charms which to his love she owed.
Wedded, some months in mutual bliss they pass'd;
But bliss so exquisite can seldom last:
Gentle, and ever yielding to her will,
Her husband was her humble vassal still;
Less every day his faithful love she prized,
And more and more his lineage base despised;
Till soon a coxcomb gay, of noble name,
Her favorite friend and constant guest became.

" Though conscious virtue guarded Hubald's breast,
Nor let vain jealousies his peace molest;
Yet, when foul whispers through the country ran,
Honor to rouse love's dormant fears began;

And, whilst his tender fondness and respect
From all injurious hints his wife protect,
Firm, but yet courteous, he the stranger told,
His house no longer such a guest should hold.
The stranger went; but soon, in his own ground,
A bleeding corse was hapless Hubald found.

"Long on his neck the fainting widow hung,
Long to his lifeless body weeping clung;
Again she fainted when she heard the bell
Toll out, in dismal notes, his funeral knell!
A tedious month, in sable weeds, she mourn'd,
Nor comfort knew until her guest return'd:
When, ere a week was past, so well they sped,
The widow'd bride again to church was led;
And though such haste much busy slander breeds,
Bless'd with Sir Hildred, she no slander heeds.

"But hasty love, commencing in a crime,
Withstands not long the canker-worm of time.
No sooner lust its transient fury sates,
Than each the other's guilt suspicious hates;
Reciprocal disgusts and feuds ensue,
And keen reproaches, deeply felt when true.
Her wealth, too, in debauch Sir Hildred wastes,
And rural pleasures, which she never tastes;
And when resentment cold ill-humor bred,
Brought home his harlot, and forsook her bed;

Till wearied out, and desperate grown, she flies,
And in a convent now neglected lies;
While he goes clad in Merlin's magic arms,
And in her jewels decks another's charms;
While still the chace by day, and feast by night,
Drown busy thought in storms of wild delight."
With indignation fired, the generous Dane
Vows instant vengeance on the usurping thane;
Nor doubts to win th' impenetrable mail,
Which 'gainst the ebon spear might then prevail,
And give once more to his desiring arms,
What most on earth he prized, the Mercian's charms.
" Yes, ever lovely, ever dear!" he cries,
" Again fond Hope its glimmering light supplies.
I only ask, in equal arms, to trace
Th' enchanter's steps, and meet him face to face;
If then on earth thy heavenly form abide,
No force shall hold thee, no concealment hide;
This sword shall make the fiend thy prison tell,
And bring thee back, e'en from his native hell."
Thus speaking, swift with lengthen'd strides he sped
To where th' embower'd mansion raised its head;
And bids the owner with his will comply,
Or else the issue of a combat try: —
" Resign this mansion to thy injured wife,
And yield to me thy armour, or thy life."

Sir Hildred, in his magic mail secure,
Meets him undaunted at the eastern door;
But knowing that the sword and spear were vain,
On other arms relied the intrepid Dane:
The magic spear he shunn'd: then forward press'd,
And clasp'd the foe against his steely breast.
The enchanted hauberk's web no force could rend,
But freely would its matted texture bend;
And grasp'd by Eric's arm, could scarce afford,
The slenderest aid to save its feeble lord:
Against the steel his crackling bones are crush'd,
From mouth and ears the crimson torrents gush'd;
Convulsed in agony, his starting eyes
Are wildly roll'd, then fix'd — he gasps and dies!
The victor takes his arms, and from his steeds
Selects the best, and in his search proceeds;
Regardless though no more the lingering day,
With fading light, directs his devious way;
For now the interval of cares and woes,
The calm, serene, and placid night, arose;
And o'er this nether world her mantle spread,
And freshening dews, and soothing slumbers shed.
Oblivion held awhile, in mute suspense,
Each babbling thought that wakes o'erlabor'd sense;
And Fancy, freed from Reason's dull control,
In soft entrancement leads the unconscious soul:

Awhile the widow's tears and orphan's grief,
In dreams of fond illusion, find relief;
The slighted lover hope again beguiles,
Again he basks in yielding beauty's smiles;
The slave again his own dear land beholds,—
What there he left in longing arms enfolds,
Nor finds, till waked to misery by pain,
That all he clasp'd was but his iron chain;
The ruin'd bankrupt endless treasures bless,
Each project thrives in semblance of success;
And, 'midst the spoils of visionary war,
The imprison'd captive mounts the conqueror's car;
Contentious Nature bids her quarrels cease,
And, hush'd in darkness, hails the hour of peace.
Earth, sea, and air in silence seem'd to rest,
All but the troubles of young Eric's breast;
Which every image fond remembrance shews
In gloomy stillness heightens and renews.
Yet onward still he goes, not knowing where,
To seek for Ethelinde, and shun despair;
While she a penitent her sins confess'd,
And told the priest each secret of her breast:
She also told how she had saved the king,
And shew'd his pledge of pardon in the ring;
Which, if his arms should o'er the Dane prevail,
To move his grateful heart could scarcely fail.

" And then, good father, thou with me shalt bear
The sacred token, and his kindness share;
For thankful is his heart, and generous too,
And firm his faith, and to his promise true."
As thus she spoke with accent soft and mild,
Through interrupted tears, she faintly smiled —
A smile of calm content with hope combined,
And patient grief in charity resign'd.
The priest was melted, and at length his prayer
Induced the abbess to be less severe.
A weekly penance only they impose,
Yet never but with life's last scene to close —
Through the long aisle, with solemn step and slow,
Alone in penitential weeds to go;
And, by the glimmering of a taper's light,
Before the saint's pale shrine to watch the night;
To chaunt the hourly hymn, and barefoot tread
The cold damp stones that hide the silent dead;
Against her sinful flesh to arm her hand,
And make the atonement sins so great demand.
Serenely cheerful, she with all complies,
Nor aught to mitigate or obviate tries;
Sustain'd by hope, her courage firm remains,
Nor dreads the harm of transitory pains,
Which conscience owned were but too justly due,
For crimes adversity restored to view.

Thus contrite, at the slow approach of night,
Unbidden she began the sacred rite;
With trembling hands the scourge and taper bore,
While faltering steps the dreary vaults explore:
Vast were the dreary vaults; with feeble rays
The glimmering taper doubtful forms displays,
Perplexing vision, while her wavering mind
Wanders in fancy's mazes unconfined.
Beneath, the floor seem'd sinking where she trod;
Above, stern images appear'd to nod;
Each grimly frowning at the uncertain light,
As slowly each successive rose to sight;
And nearer still, and nearer as she drew,
More fierce the fancied scowl of anger grew;
Pale Death seem'd lingering in each sculptured stone,
As through the dark its dim reflections shone.
At length the sacred shrine she sought appears,
And hope again her trembling bosom cheers.
Silent before it first she knelt, and sought
Awhile to fix the wavering tide of thought;
Then raised her voice; but as the hymn she sung,
On every note contagious rapture hung;
Each pious sister from her cell drew near,
And pleased the reverend abbess stood to hear.
The voice and skill divine possess'd a charm,
Which e'en the sternest rigor could disarm;

Through silent night the sounds mellifluous roll,
And waft, in heavenly ecstasies, the soul:
From breast to breast the soft emotions ran,
And all to think her innocent began.
In nature's richest tones, refined by art,
She seem'd to breathe the music of the heart;
And sure the heart, which through such lips had sent
Tones so celestial, must be innocent.
Then ere the harsher mandate was obey'd,
She raised her beauteous eyes to heaven, and said: —
" Oh! if a wretch so sunk in sins can dare
To lift her weak unhallow'd voice in prayer;
If transient sufferings can at mercy's throne
For crimes of guilt indelible atone;
Accept this act of voluntary pain,
And let my blood wash out the deadly stain!
And thou, most injured! whom this callous heart
Doom'd, unprepared, untimely to depart;
If still thy soul released percipient live,
Ah! yet in pity hear me, and forgive!
Forgive the direful deed foul treachery wrought,
By vice impell'd, by mad ambition taught!
At Heaven's all-just tribunal intercede
For one who dares not e'en for mercy plead!
Thy virtues still propitious may prevail,
And mediation save though penance fail."

She ceased, and silent bow'd her beauteous head,
And raised her hand: — but hark! what distant tread
Approaches slow? Perhaps the abbess sent
Some nun severe t' enforce her punishment!
'Twas needless thus her promise to distrust,
But still 'twas provident, perhaps 'twas just, —
Perhaps e'en kind: another's hand might spare,
Though not her own, what nature could not bear.
As thus she ponder'd, nearer came the sound,
And harsher notes the measured steps confound.
In cadence echoing through the vaulted aisle,
She seems to hear the clink of plated mail;
Invisible the cause, though nearer still
It quicken'd comes; her faltering senses thrill.
She listens yet, in mute suspense appall'd,
Then strove to rise; but fear each joint enthrall'd;
Till soon her taper doubtfully display'd
An awful form, in Alfgar's arms array'd.
In Alfgar's arms! too well those arms she knew,
No direr spectre Hell's abyss could shew.
The burnish'd steel shot lightnings from its breast,
And grinning fiends seem'd nodding on its crest.
With soul collected, and with steadfast eyes,
She views it long; — to speak then vainly tries;
For fix'd in horror, frozen in dismay,
Nor tongue nor lips her urgent will obey.

She drops the taper, palsied in affright,
And fainting falls 'mid thickest shades of night.
In haste the spectre raised her up, and bore
Her torpid body through the outer door;
Where, through the visor, twilight soon display'd,
To eyes scarce open, sister Adalaide!
Who, while her hymn was sung, above the rest
Warm raptures of applause had oft express'd;
And though the abbess chid her, 'twas in vain,—
Her heart's effusions nothing could restrain.
This sister Adalaide was fresh and young,
In temper gay, in person tall and strong.
The abbess call'd her niece, and loved her so,
That seldom from her side she let her go:
From all the rest secluded was she kept,
And in her own retired apartment slept.
It was by stealth alone, that she had seen,
And that obscurely, Mercia's lovely queen;
Had seen her in affliction, pale and sad,
Stretch'd on her mat, in rugged hair-cloth clad:
Yet, e'en from this short transitory view,
She thought the lovely face was one she knew;—
One that she oft had seen in happier days,
And soon her voice the mystery betrays;
For Adalaide before had heard her sing,
And often with her touch'd th' accordant string:

Whence, moved by pity, she resolved that night
To give her freedom, and partake her flight.
A safe disguise she well knew where to find,
And had before to use it been inclined;
For, lately in these holy walls immured,
Their dull inactive life she ill endured;
And long'd impatient once again to try
The joys and dangers of lost liberty.

She therefore watch'd until the abbess slept,
Then down the stairs and through the cloisters crept;
And in the garb she found, of plated mail,
Silent advanced along the gloomy aisle;
From whence, with arm robust, she bore away
The penitent, as still entranced she lay.
With prudent care too, and prospective thought,
The page's dress she for disguise had brought;
And, lest too slow on foot they might proceed,
Near in the stable harness'd Eric's steed.
The queen revived, resumed her page's dress,
When mounted on the steed they forward press.

Through unfrequented ways o'erhung with wood,
They sought the turbid Severn's refluent flood;
Determined on the Cambrian shore to wait
Till war had fix'd their country's wavering fate;
And by the event of battle it were known
What sovereign Mercia's fertile realm might own.

But soon the queen, with watching faint and tired,
Refreshment and repose awhile required;
And, provident in all, good Adalaide
Had due provision for refreshment made:
And near them now a wild sequester'd dell,
Opening, disclosed a solitary cell;
A cave by nature form'd, whence, deep embower'd,
A bubbling fount its crystal current pour'd,
Till stagnant in a limpid lake below,
Where beetling rocks their bright reflections shew.
It seem'd their wearied senses to invite,
Till strength renew'd might renovate their flight.
High o'er the grot, rich clustering ivy spreads,
And eglantine beneath its odors sheds;
Round moss-grown trees gay honeysuckles twine,
And bowers of clematis their shades combine.
No tracks of man or beast their fears excite,
So in they turn, and from their steed alight.
Then sister Adalaide, by heat oppress'd,
Took off her helmet and her iron vest;
And, in the day's full light, exposed to view
A face and form which well the princess knew;
A youthful thane's, of person slim and fair,
To Ceulf near allied, old Osric's heir;
Who, deck'd in Alfgar's arms, a troop had led,
In Ceulf's cause, and from the battle fled;

But, dreading still the victor's wrath to meet,
Sought shelter in the convent's safe retreat;
Where, by the guardian's prudent care array'd,
He lived beloved, as sister Adalaide;
Till tired of being so fondled and confined,
He sigh'd for love of more congenial kind;
And yielded to resistless beauty's lure —
Of joys more exquisite, though less secure.
The queen in all she did had been sincere,
And meant the penance due to be severe;
Nor unfulfill'd had left it, but the fright
Resign'd her passive to their sudden flight;
Yet still she smiled such ministers to see
Assisting vows of female chastity;
And thought, if penance were the means of grace,
It should be suffer'd in a purer place.
Nor less thick-coming doubts her soul torment
Of what might be this venturous youth's intent;
His morals ne'er had been for rigor famed,
Nor was he likely to be now reclaim'd;
The convent's principles would ill defend
The rights of husband, relative, or friend.
Alone, 'mid solitary wilds, 'twere vain
To strive his lawless passions to restrain;
Nor could she claim, as virtue's frail defence,
Forbearance due to trembling innocence.

'Mid gazing crowds exalted on a throne,
No fault or frailty could escape unknown;
Yet, though not coyly scrupulous or nice,
Both pride and prudence shunn'd promiscuous vice.
Never, unless ambition bade them part,
She gave her person till she gave her heart;
Nor could her heart a new impression prove,
While still devoted to her Eric's love.
Yet soon refreshment lull'd each faint alarm,
And calm she slept, reclined upon his arm;
Till soon she found the arm more closely press'd
Awake each lull'd suspicion in her breast.
Mildly her words the liberty reprove,—
He pleads the ardor of resistless love;
Love which had bid him every danger brave,
Her beauty from outrageous wrongs to save;
Which only claim'd what gratitude must owe,
And virtuous honor surely would bestow;
At least (and near she saw a dagger lie)
Her prudence would with gratitude comply.
"Then spare my blushes, and awhile retire,"
She cries, "while I put off this male attire;
Wait but a moment there within the cave,
While these cool streams my wearied body lave;
That pure, at least, and spotless, you may find
All it can boast, when to your arms resign'd.

Nay, do not doubt me, — short is the delay,
And love obedient shall the boon repay."
With sweet consenting smile and downcast eyes,
She spoke: the unsuspecting youth complies;
But scarcely was withdrawn and hid from view,
When swiftly to the browsing steed she flew;
Gathered the reins, and leap'd into the seat,
And left her lover in his cool retreat.
Pleased with his light and lovely load, the steed
Spontaneous gallops with redoubled speed:
She pats his lofty neck, and bids him prove
His faith deserving of his master's love;
Nor yield up one who his great soul had charm'd
To thanes turn'd nuns, or wandering wizards arm'd.

BOOK THE ELEVENTH.

In vain would Vice avenging Justice shun,
In vain to solitude and darkness run:
Where'er it lurks conceal'd, where'er it flies,
Through every secret haunt, and deep disguise,
All-seeing Heaven, which every heart unfolds,
Each fell design of inmost thought beholds;
Bids e'en the means the ends intended shew,
And self-detected Fraud stand forth to view;
While Guilt its own mute instruments confess,
And blast its hopes in semblance of success.
This amorous Osric soon experienced true,
And felt what judgments lawless lusts pursue.
Ere from the solitary cave he came,
Far off the steed had borne the beauteous dame;
And nought, except what haste had left, he found —
The turband sash which had her tresses bound.
This on his dagger's point he heedless bore;
And cursed his own fond folly o'er and o'er,
Which could so hastily the jilt believe,
And suffer well-known falsehood to deceive.

As sauntering thus amid the shady grove,
To trace the steed's imprinted hoofs he strove,
Sudden th' advancing clink of arms he hears,
And lo! behind a hauberk'd knight appears;
Who, swift approaching, close beside him stood,
And with enquiring eyes, the trophy view'd;
Then vaulting from his seat, with deadly hand
Seized the pale youth, and drew his glittering brand.
"Thus then at length, magician vile!" he cries,
Thou meet'st my wrath, without thy fiend's disguise;
Without thy magic lance, and magic mail, —
This arm shall now o'er all thy arts prevail.
Then, ere I send thy guilty soul to Hell,
Say where the queen endures thy potent spell;
Or has fell murder mingled with the dust
Those heavenly charms which dared resist thy lust?
Ah! give her to these longing arms again,
And pardon for each outrage past obtain;
But know that if thou darest from truth depart,
Instant this sword shall probe thy treacherous heart;
Or lingering torments, more efficient, try
What constancy thy demons can supply."
Amazed he heard, for well th' imperious tone
Of haughty Eric's dreaded voice was known:
Whence, urged by fear, he told, with visage pale,
And quivering lip, the melancholy tale;

And still by menaces more furious press'd,
His foul designs of lawless lust confess'd;
Then fresh the steed's imprinted footsteps shew'd,
Where through the wood the beauteous queen had rode:
But threats and promises were tried in vain, —
The trembling stripling could nought else explain;
But oft with tears and protestations swore,
'Twas all he knew — his tongue could tell no more:
Till furious Eric cries, "Try then, my sword —
Try if his heart the secret can afford.
Perhaps 'tis there the ministers of Hell
Have lodged the mystery of their potent spell;
Probed by this point, perhaps, without disguise,
In native form, the demon may arise."
In vain the suppliant youth attempts to kneel, —
His gushing blood hath tinged the reeking steel:
He gasps and falls; while, scarce convinced, the Dane
Sees the same form unchanged in death remain;
Nor from his blood, on prancing steed, appear
The golden hauberk and the ebon spear.
"Whate'er thou art," he cries, "presumptuous fool,
Death's icy grasp, at least, thy lusts may cool.
No demons now thy mystic summons wait,
With arms enchanted, to avert thy fate:
Life's game is o'er, whate'er its stake hath been, —
A lecherous abbess, or a lovely queen.

Yet, who can tell how far thy crimes prevail'd,
Or timid virtue in the struggle fail'd!
Ah no! — her soul his base desires withstood,
Till this vile dagger drank her heart's pure blood;
And thus in scorn th' inhuman monster bore
The spoils, which from her lifeless corse he tore.
Dear spoils, which oft her lovely brows have press'd!
Here lie for ever treasured in my breast;
And let these kisses from my lips impart
A kindred glow to meet my throbbing heart."
The relic then he in his bosom placed,
And through the glade th' imprinted footsteps traced;
Which, o'er the turf as now the courser flew,
More indistinct and evanescent grew;
Till where converging roads each other cross'd,
The mix'd impressions were confused and lost.
Yet still, with cautious steps and prying eyes,
To find the devious track again he tries;
Till night at length her sable veil distends,
And all in one dim tinge of shadow blends;
Save where, through opening glades, a doubtful light
With fancy's forms deludes the troubled sight:
While, 'mid the still repose that reigns around,
Of every rustling leaf he hears the sound,
And thinks that every breeze which whispers by
Conveys a murmur, or repeats a sigh;

Till now despairing, to no certain way
Confined, he lets th' unguided courser stray.
The courser, whom no tender cares molest,
As hunger urged him forward, forward press'd;
Till soon a feeble ray of trembling light
Appear'd the weary wanderer to invite,
And, through a deep and solitary glen,
Announced the hospitable haunts of men;
But, nearer seen, a lamp's pale glimmer shew'd
A lonely anchorite's retired abode —
A rustic hut, where, safe with open door,
A pale wan student conn'd his mystic lore:
His silvery beard hung down his wither'd breast,
And age and abstinence his looks confess'd.
No builder's skill the structure rude display'd, —
On walls of turf a roof of reeds was laid;
Yet all its tenant wanted could supply —
Defence from cold, and shelter from the sky.
A spring his drink, the soil his food affords,
And nuts and apples form his richest hoards.
Securely on a plank with halm o'erspread,
Each night, when weary, he reclines his head,
And mocks with snores the care-distracted breast
On downy mattress languishing for rest;
Nor heeds, while earth her annual gift supplies,
What kingdoms perish, or what factions rise,

Where armies march, or midnight robbers prowl, —
Safe are his lamp of clay and wooden bowl.
Nor hopes, nor fears, such humble wealth inspires;
Nor bolted door, nor watchful guard, requires.
Intent the hero look'd, as near he drew,
And soon the hermit's alter'd features knew.
'Twas Frœna, once a Danish priest renown'd
For prophecy and magic skill profound;
Whose voice the demons of the deep obey'd,
And Time's dark secrets to his eye display'd:
Whence taught the issue of the war to dread,
He from his country's sinking cause had fled;
Pretending still that 'twas to save his life
From foul conspiracy and Sidroc's knife;
Who, stung by jealousy, the plot had laid,
And secret instruments of murder paid.
Of Osbert since he purer doctrines learn'd,
And from the paths of ancient error turn'd;
With brighter spirits communed; and, relieved
From stains of sin, the sacred rite received
Which mercy to apostate man hath given, —
The stamp of grace, to fit the soul for Heaven.
"This seer, perhaps," then Eric said, "may tell
What fate the lovely wanderer hath befell;
The dire magician's kindred arts detect,
And to his secret haunts my search direct."

Thus saying, he dismounted, and address'd
The sage, whose fears he courteously repress'd:
Then briefly told his tale, and begg'd to know,
What his mysterious art of course could shew,
Where now the lovely captive lay immured;—
Whether in some strong castle's keep secured,
Or, in some dreary prison's vaults confined,
Again to fetters were her limbs resign'd:
" Or if still direr guilt hath closed her eyes,
Ah! tell me where her bleeding body lies;
And where th' inhuman murderer skulks from view,
That swiftest vengeance may his crimes pursue."
The hermit paused awhile; then said, " To know
What thou requirest would be but useless woe;
Therefore let this suffice: she lives,—is free;
But Heaven portends she cannot live for thee.
Its curse pursues her; and, rash youth, beware,
Lest thou that curse inevitable share;
Nay, lest the hand, employ'd by wrath divine
To wield its sword of justice, should be thine.
Her fate now calls her hence; her race is run;
And wouldst thou live, the dire contagion shun.
O'er all our host, too, bolts of wrath impend,
Which soon in swift destruction shall descend.
See where the rolling tempest Alfred guides!
See where serene amid the storm he rides!

Which, ere to-morrow's stars have closed the day,
Shall sweep our weak discordant power away.
Then fly, and seek again thy native shore;
Or know thy turbid dream of life is o'er."
"No!" said the generous youth; "whatever fate
May yet my falling country's banners wait;
Whatever curse may Heaven in wrath decree,
Let the same curse impartial fall on me!
What though, ungrateful for my labors past,
She knaves upheld, my love's fond hopes to blast;
And wrong'd me, e'en in honor's tenderest part—
The warm affections of a generous heart;
Yet, when she sinks by hostile millions press'd,
'Tis not the time her judgments to contest.
Then, though her rulers wrongs with wrongs combine,
Their worst injustice cannot sanction mine;
Then duty bids us pay the life we owe,
And one less valued none can now bestow;
For since of thee, dear Ethelinde, bereft,
This world hath nothing worth life's labor left.
'Tis but a tissue frail of toils and cares,
Of follies blundering into vice's snares;
Of hopes fantastical, and projects wild,
To lull the dotard, and allure the child;
Still leading forward to some seeming good,
Only desired because not understood.

Loathing the present, grieving at the past,
And most impatient for what comes too fast,
We live to blend, in memory's motley train,
Short hours of pleasure with long days of pain.
" Better, ere helpless age or slow disease,
The inherent plagues of lingering life, increase,
To sink at once with undiminish'd light,
And close bright glory's day in instant night,
Than guard the glimmering lamp till dull decay,
In pain and weakness, quench its twilight ray;
And, in the enfeebled mind and wasted frame,
Dishonor blight each wreath of former fame.
" Hence then to end the feverish dream I go,
Nor yet unpaid shall victory grace the foe;
The Danes their base injustice, too, shall own,
When thus by wrongs unmoved my faith is shewn;
And even she, than glory's self more dear,
Perhaps may grace my memory with a tear,
And in the majesty of grief, serene,
Confess my love was worthy Mercia's queen.
And oh! should Heaven our arms with victory crown,
Again to place thee safely on thy throne,
Let me but live to know that thou art blest,
Then welcome death! — I leave to Heaven the rest.
" But should relentless Fate have fix'd thy doom,
Ah! yet receive me in the untimely tomb;

Catch on thy quivering lip my parting sigh,
And let our souls, thus link'd, together fly!
Thus both together wait the final day,
When Thor's grim wolf shall make this world his prey;
And should his wrath a victim then require,
On me exhausted shall that wrath expire;
On me, whose spirit shall contented rest
In Hell's worst agonies, if thine be blest!"
He said, and his good steed again bestrode,
And all impatient through the thickets rode;
Lest, distant thus, he might arrive too late
To share his country's glory, or her fate.
It was, indeed, the self-same day and hour
That ALFRED, for the fight, drew forth his power;
Resolved, ere orient morn illumed the skies,
Their camp, by feuds distracted, to surprise;
And while dark Midnight spread its favoring veil,
Their slumbering hosts, where most exposed, assail:
For well, explored by his experienced view,
The strength and weakness of each part he knew;
And where Security its post neglects
Or active Vigilance in arms protects;
Where firm Allegiance undisturb'd remain'd,
Or factious Discontent control disdeign'd.
In order marshall'd, and in close array,
Each firm division took its separate way.

Experienced Sigebert the Mercians leads,
And Oddune bold with Devon's sons proceeds;
And, from Cornubian mines restored to light,
Arm'd Britons with their Saxon friends unite;
And with them Cambrians, like in language, went,
Whom good prince Mervin had to ALFRED sent.

But worn by long affliction Oddune came,
Lamenting still his hapless daughter's shame;
Who, by a lawless passion's influence sway'd,
Her father, self, and country had betray'd;
And now, abandon'd to reproach and scorn,
An exile wanders, needy and forlorn.

Scarce yet the earth its second course had run
Of annual circuits round its central sun,
Since, by her kind and anxious father sent,
To cross the Severn's refluent tide she went,
And seek protection on the Cambrian shore,
Till wasteful war's impending storm was o'er.
But Eric, who the Danish squadrons led,
Which o'er the west their swelling deluge spread,
Her feeble escort in the dust had laid,
And borne away the unresisting maid:
Yet courteous still, and to his captive kind,
The victor all a victor's rights resign'd;
And soon as leisure could the time afford,
Back to the earl the beauteous prize restored;

And bade her tell him, that although he fought
For glory only, nor such trophies sought,
Yet should he, guarded still, the Danes await,
He soon might claim her at his castle's gate;
Or, when his towers beneath their arms should fall,
Receive her trembling from the captured wall.

Though hostile threats and sounds of martial din
May seem unapt a damsel's heart to win,
Yet ancient bards, who Nature's book had read,
Have told who most with Love's frail goddess sped;
And how enamor'd, to the blood-stain'd arms
Of War's grim tyrant she resign'd her charms:
His boist'rous fierceness, first beheld with fear,
Soon seem'd the ardor of a soul sincere,
And shew'd the flattering image to her eyes
Of lawless force become her beauty's prize;
A prize to make e'en heavenly beauty vain,
Since nought besides could e'er that force restrain.
With sword and shield, in glittering armor dress'd,
Love rules resistless every female breast;
Kindles his torch at proud Ambition's fires,
And glowing thoughts and brilliant hopes inspires.

Fair Runa thus, though anxious to depart,
Felt some such image soon frequent her heart;
And though each means to drive it thence she tries,
The image still her utmost means defies:

Still Eric's piercing glance and martial mien,
In fancy's eye, in spite of all, are seen;
Still the soft accents vibrate in her ear
With which he strove her drooping soul to cheer;
Still fresh remembrance paints the tender smile
Which sought the captive's terrors to beguile;
And tenderness in each still pleased her more,
As what the chief had seldom used before.
Command and menace seem'd his natural tone,
But mild it was to her, and her alone;
To her alone his terror-beaming eye
Soften'd each glance in gentlest courtesy;
And that stern voice, which sternest hearts dismay'd,
Which seem'd not given to win, but be obey'd,
To her, and her alone, she ever found,
In mild persuasion's mildest accents sound.
Yet modest and discreet, his words and air
Denote no lover's, but a guardian's care; —
A guardian's care, that still sufficed to prove
The bliss, the blessing, of such care from love:
Whence oft she sigh'd to think their Fates ordain
That she such blessing never can obtain;
Nay, that 'twas sinful even to deplore
His absence, or desire to see him more.
Thus pondering, to her father's strong abode,
Escorted by a Danish troop, she rode;

Nor long unfollow'd Eric's threats remain,
But soon his camp o'erspreads the subject plain;
His battering engines shake the solid walls,
And every heart his dreaded name appals.
Alone, with mix'd emotions Runa felt
Soft gleams of hope the frosts of terror melt;
But blamed her heart, which thus presumed to owe
One grateful feeling to her country's woe;
Or let one wish against a father find
A transient refuge in a daughter's mind.
She blamed it oft, but still she blamed in vain, —
The wish, though oft expell'd, return'd again;
And fancy still some specious plea invents,
Or some new scheme of subterfuge presents.
Thus meditating, sleepless oft she lay,
And, weary, watch'd the slow approach of day;
Or, from the lofty keep's commanding height,
O'erlook'd the camp till swift return'd the night.
There, while the pomp of war she seems to view,
Eric alone her wandering eyes pursue;
And, whether through th' admiring ranks he rode,
Or where to point the ponderous engines shew'd;
Or with an engine's force the javelin threw,
Or shot the arrow from the twanging yew;
Alike in every act he seem'd to shine,
And matchless might with graceful skill combine.

"Sure 'tis some angel sent from heaven," she cries,
"To bless the righteous, and th' unjust chastise;
And do not we, who thus his power withstand,
With impious arms oppose divine command?"

When tired with toil her anxious father came,
And, pointing, bade her that proud chieftain name,
Confused she hesitates and droops her head,
While burning blushes o'er her cheeks are spread;
And, scarce pronounced, the name of Eric hung
In faltering accents on her trembling tongue;
The tear too glisten'd in her downcast eye,
And, half-suppress'd, expired the lingering sigh.
Nor had the earl remain'd so long deceived,
If e'er his heart such guilt could have believed;
Yet rarely were her signs of passion shewn,
As sorrow ever loves to weep alone.

Upon the keep's high turret still she sate,
And watch'd each day the various turns of fate;
And still she drops a tear or heaves a sigh,
As near her hero darts or arrows fly;
Yet fain her heart would from itself conceal
What those fond sighs and tears too plain reveal.

"Just Heaven!" she cries, "and for my father's foe
Do these my tears in impious sorrow flow?
Lest he who seeks his honor'd life should die,
Does this fell bosom breathe th' unnatural sigh?

Ah no! more generous e'en than just and brave,
The hero seeks to conquer but to save;
And who can tell what yet the Powers Divine
By this frail heart's fond impulse may design?
"While o'er the isle triumphant reigns the Dane,
Our feeble efforts must be worse than vain —
The rage of dark despair, — which, envious, tries
To spoil and waste, when heaven to rule denies;
And irritate by frivolous delay,
That bloodier foes may riot in their prey; —
When some base erring hand the shaft hath sped
That mingles thee, great Eric, with the dead, —
Some erring hand; for none can sure design
The direful deed that mars that form divine!
"Ah yet, my rash and impious tongue, forbear!
A valiant father's patriot labors spare;
Nor let a sinful hope of foul desire
My soul with guilt of parricide inspire.
Ah! rather let me from the tempter fly,
And innocent of all, but frailty, die!
"And yet, how oft hath wise submission saved,
Presumptuous minds, which useless dangers braved!
How oft hath rescued, in their own despite,
Rash men, who strove in contests vain to fight;
And sure no contest ever was more vain,
Than that which now our vanquish'd arms maintain.

"Then let me snatch from this unequal strife,
Ere 'tis too late, my noble father's life;
Nor let wild honor thus his heart enslave,
To fall the victim of what none can save.
Eric, by nature generous, just, and mild,
Will love the parent as he loves the child.
And sure our sympathies innate must prove
That he too feels some latent sparks of love;
Which, fann'd by gratitude, shall brighter grow,
Till each fond heart with equal passion glow;
And I, the pledge of happiness and peace,
Shall bid my country's wrongs and sufferings cease;
By mild persuasion's gentle influence, gain
What bloodiest wars so long have sought in vain;
And, bless'd in all, spread blessings all around,
In love o'er arms with mutual triumph crown'd!"
Thus oft, by doubts distracted, did she say,
As love and duty bore alternate sway;
And reason waver'd, fearful to oppose
The growing influence of more favor'd foes;
Till love at length resistless ruled her soul,
And scorn'd each wise opponent's dull control;
While, ever prompt to serve if not obey'd,
Reason changed sides, and strove his cause to aid.
Short are the pangs which man from love endures,
Its finer griefs its coarse indulgence cures;

But woman's wounded heart no comfort knows,
No adverse pleasure mitigates her woes;
Nor social revelry, nor sensual joy,
Benumb her sorrows, or their sources cloy.
In rigid forms of moral rule confined,
Her sole indulgences are of the mind;
Which, strong in sentiment, in reason frail,
To moved affection spreads out all its sail;
And lightly, without helm or ballast, goes
Where'er the wind impels, or current flows.
While fawning flattery puffs up foolish pride,
And buoyant hope swells passion's fiery tide;
For ever pointing to delights unknown,
Which fancy decks in colors all her own;
Till scorn's black tempests, or all-wrecking time,
Engulph in death or overwhelm in crime;
Such crime as Runa's fate had now prepared,
In apt occasion, which her soul ensnared.
A secret passage from the keep she knew,
Of which the keys hung tempting in her view;
And often, from a weak and slender bow,
She sportive shot light arrows at the foe;
But though too light the armed breast to wound,
For direr purposes their use she found:
Wrapp'd round a shaft, her slender bow could send
What treacherous love might for the foe intend.

She tried to write; but, long perplex'd in thought,
For words to suit her guilty purpose sought;
Blotted and tore the paper; bit the pen;
Repented writing, and then wrote again.
Her name and rank 'twere prudent to suppress,
Till what she plann'd was sanction'd by success;
Yet Eric might suspect, without a name,
From whom the secret invitation came.
"Then let him! sure he cannot but approve
This generous effort of my faithful love —
My faithful love! — obtrusive thoughts, away!
My fate impels me, and I must obey."
This said, she wrote, "That since the will of Heaven
This isle's dominion to the Danes had given,
A Saxon, anxious that their wars should cease,
And both enjoy the bliss of equal peace,
Would, whilst the station'd guards were lull'd in sleep,
Open the postern door below the keep;
Trusting that Eric's honor would restrain
His followers, nor let blood his conquest stain."
With trembling hand she shot it from the bow,
And saw it reach the destined spot below;
With heart that trembled too, 'twixt hopes and fears,
And cheeks which blush'd through mingled smiles and tears;
She saw it taken up, and borne with speed
To Eric's tent; and saw, too, Eric read;

Although too distant for her eye to trace
The smile of scorn or welcome in his face:
Whence busy fancy's vague conjectures try
To aid perception, and frail sense supply;
While still contending passions rend her breast,
And love scarce hopes what conscience must detest.
"Who win by treason traitors still despise,
And hate the guilty means by which they rise;
Nor will the hero's generous pride receive
What fraud and base ingratitude can give.
O that she ne'er had written! or again,
With cooler judgment, could direct her pen!
Much might be added; much might be replaced
In better form: what cause for so much haste!
Some happier mode, too, had perhaps been found,
And Eric's honor more securely bound.
'Twere best e'en now to leave undone the deed,
But then still direr dangers would succeed:
All would be publish'd by the indignant foe,
And soon the scroll its guilty author shew.
The crime was past; for ever must the stain
Of treacherous parricide infix'd remain:
Its guilt and infamy she ne'er can fly;
Her choice is now, — to triumph or to die.
To die were best! but still, to damn her name
Enough was done, in everlasting shame:

Self-murder would but add one crime the more
To damn more deeply all that went before;
And endless scorn, still worse than hate, pursue
The wretch who plann'd what yet she dared not do;
Whose coward soul to guilt's last refuge fled, —
By terror, not repentant sorrows, sped!"

Thus rack'd with conscious guilt, remorse, and fear,
She sat entranced till midnight dark drew near,
And, wearied by the toils and heats of day,
In deathlike sleep the trusty warders lay;
When lo! a smother'd light attracts her view
To Eric's tent, and near, and nearer drew.
"'Tis done!" she starting cries; "hence, vain delays!
My fate now calls." She rose and took the keys;
Then oped the doors. It was th' appointed hour —
The Dane arrived, and gain'd unseen the tower;
Which high above the rest majestic stands,
And all the castle's subject strength commands.
Loud shouts of victory rend the veil of night,
Confused the Saxons rush in wild affright;
The earl with some few faithful followers fled,
The rest to Guthron's camp are captive led:
His castle garrison'd the foe retains,
And hard exactions waste his wide domains.

But Nature's wretched outcast went the maid,
By all deserted, and of all afraid;

E'en Eric bade her see his face no more,
But Heaven propitiate, and her crime deplore.
And soon, to Mercia's troubled kingdom sent,
From Devon, yet but half subdued, he went;
Whence soon the earl, by foes less able press'd,
The lands her treachery lost again possess'd;
But still her guilt hangs heavy on his heart,
Nor time, nor fortune, comfort can impart:
His darling child his direst curse to prove,
And duty hate, where nature still must love!

The stout Northumbrians aged Siward guides,
Whose hoary hairs the ponderous helmet hides;
And still his giant frame, though shrunk with years,
Arms which none else could wield unburthen'd bears;
Still to the head his ell-long shaft he drew,
Though none besides could bend the stubborn yew;
Still barb'd with death, the inevitable dart,
Through plated mail or hauberk, pierced the heart.
Hengist and Morcar, Edric, too, the proud,
To valor tried and skill long practised, bow'd;
And, though by birth conjoin'd in equal sway,
Spontaneous all the hoary chief obey.

Of knights the king conducts a chosen band,
Where'er occasion summon'd, to command;
To watch the battle's turns, and hie with speed
Where ranks out-number'd most might succour need.

Among them first he bade young Edwin ride,
Rich in the trophy of his rescued bride.
But dire forebodings her sad heart molest,
And anxious fears torment her tender breast;
Yet duty calls, and honor points the way,
And every mild affection must obey.
With trembling hands his polish'd greaves she laced,
And buckled close the corselet round his waist;
Then placed the plumed helmet on his head,
And raised her eyes to heaven, and sighing said:—
"Ye guardian saints and ruling powers above,
Whose high behests have sanction'd wedded love;
Who, souls in one, by pure affection join'd,
With rites yourselves decreed have deign'd to bind!
If yet my sins your judgments hard must bear,
On me let fall your wrath — my husband spare!
Here take again the life which late you gave;
But ah! my generous, dear deliverer, save!
Or, if his country's cause demand his life,
O strike, while yet he lives, his wretched wife!
Preserve her not this last of ills to know,
To drain life's deepest, bitterest cup of woe;
But, if to-morrow's sun these eyes must view,
Ah, let it be this blessing to renew!"
She said, and clasp'd him to her heaving breast,
Then fainting sunk, by grief and fear oppress'd.

But hark! the signal calls, nor brooks delay,
He kiss'd her pallid cheek, and hied away.

And now, condensed in order firm and strong,
Through night serene the army march'd along;
Silent, as when before the southern gale,
Low fleecy clouds, through ambient ether, sail,
And, slowly gathering on the mountain's side,
O'er woods, imbrown'd in deeper shadows, glide.

Each chief, observant of their monarch's plan,
At once the unforeseen attack began;
They scale the mounds, and like a deluge sweep
The prostrate foe securely lull'd in sleep.
Then clamor loud and dissonant arose,
And half-arm'd crowds in vain their force oppose;
Till, as around in wider circles spread,
It roused each slumbering chieftain from his bed;
When, not unmindful of his former deeds,
Each calmly arms, and to his post proceeds;
Collects his followers, and, in firm array,
Prepares his wonted prowess to display.
From rank to rank intrepid Guthron flies,
And each resource of skill and valor tries;
To higher ground retreats; then firm remains,
And steady and unmoved the charge sustains.

There slaughter long with equal fury raged,
As front to front the adverse lines engaged;

Swords clash'd on swords; and, through the gloom of night,
The stricken steel flash'd transient gleams of light.
By chance directed, fell each deadly blow,
As dark confusion mingled friend and foe;
Till 'mid the canvass cabins torches fly,
And flames the want of clearer light supply.
Instant the crackling tents around them blaze,
And curling smoke emits ambiguous rays;
Before the wind the fiery deluge pours
Destruction swift, and all the camp devours;
In glittering spangles flakes and sparks arise,
As clouds of vapor waft them to the skies.
Then perish'd Sidroc and the feeble train
Whom age, disease, or baser fears retain;
While winds and fires with blended roar confound
Shouts, screams, and groans in one promiscuous sound;
And demons, hurtling in the troubled air,
With louder tumult discord's triumph share.
Then, too, the Danes, though firm was every breast,
In fainter efforts fainter hopes confess'd;
Whilst ALFRED 'mid the storm triumphant rides,
Directs each movement, and the battle guides;
With hand and voice the conflict dire maintains,
Impels the timid, and the rash restrains.

Eric, approaching, saw the raging fire
In curling volumes of red flame aspire;
And, 'mid the glare that paints the western skies,
Hears cries of death, and shouts of triumph rise!
He guess'd the cause, and with redoubled speed
Urged forward to the camp his rapid steed;
And enter'd as the morning's doubtful light
Slowly dispell'd the lingering shades of night;
And, sinking fast, the flames of wasteful fire
In cinders grey and glowing braise expire.
Promiscuous shouts his glad return proclaim,
And every tongue repeats the hero's name.
Again reviving hopes each bosom warm,
Point every sword, and strengthen every arm;
His eye's quick lightnings every spirit cheer,
His thundering voice dispels each lurking fear;
Glory's bright visions glitter on his breast,
And victory seems enthroned upon his crest.
Their broken ranks he rallies and collects,
Their force combines, arranges, and directs;
Then arm to arm th' unequal fight renews,
And deep in Saxon blood the ground imbrues.
Their blunted swords and darts in vain assail
Th' enchanted coat's impenetrable mail;
The frailer temper of their burnish'd shields
At once to Merlin's magic weapon yields;

And broken ranks, who saw their chieftains laid
Low in the dust, fled scatter'd and dismay'd.
Ludulf and Oddune, wounded both, retired,
And, both unhorsed, had on the field expired,
But reverend Ludulf's young and faithful page
At once stepp'd forth, and met the victor's rage;
Received the fatal weapon in his breast,
Then cried, " 'Tis well, — I thus at last am bless'd.
Ah yet, my injured father! shalt thou live,
At least to pity; e'en, perhaps, forgive!"
Unheeding of his words the victor pass'd,
Nor thought nor look upon the vanquish'd cast;
'Gainst those alone who still in arms advance,
With force resistless he directs his lance.
But Oddune's ear the name of father wounds,
And deeply in his heart's recesses sounds!
Instant he turns; the bleeding corse he views, —
The helm displaced, his Runa's image shews.
All pale in death. Amazed awhile he stood,
Then strove in vain to stop the streaming blood;
Her eyes are sunk, her vital breath congeal'd —
He clasps and bears her lifeless from the field.
Eric, meanwhile, th' astonish'd foe pursued,
And far around the plain with Saxons strew'd.
Then Hengist fell; then hapless Edwin died —
Vain were the prayers of his ill-fated bride:

Pierced through the heart he closed his eyes in death,
And bless'd his Ellen with his latest breath.
E'en ALFRED's self had shared th' untimely grave,
But Heaven a champion sent the king to save;
For Eric sees, o'er prostrate heaps, advance
The golden hauberk, and the ebon lance:
Instant to meet th' enchanted arms he goes,
And magic power to magic power oppose;
But still unequal were his weapons found —
Touch'd by the sable spear his arms resound,
And back he tumbles prostrate on the ground.
There stunn'd he lies beneath the horse's feet;
The Saxons shout; the Danes, dismay'd, retreat:
They saw the last great bulwark of their trust
Repulsed, o'erthrown, and trampled in the dust;
On every side triumphant press'd the foe,
And many a valiant chief their spears laid low.
There Guthron fell, and daring Hubba died,
And Hyngar paid the forfeit of his pride;
While routed and dispersed the rabble fly,
And beg, unarm'd, the victor's clemency:
Confused as doves, when, from the mountain's height,
The rapid falcon near directs his flight;
And, as he cleaves above the liquid way,
Observes their progress, and selects his prey.

Then ALFRED waved his hand, in sign of peace,
And check'd his knights, and bade the slaughter cease.
" Let war's dire evils, with their causes, end,
And every vanquish'd foe be deem'd a friend;
The suppliant stranger welcome as a guest,
Whate'er his country—'tis high Heaven's behest.
Captors and captives, now let all retire
Back to our camp, since all repose require;
And, when night's transient shades again are fled,
Pursue the flying, and inter the dead."
The chiefs their sovereign's honor'd voice obey,
And joy and triumph cheer their weary way.
Meanwhile, fair Ethelinde her course pursued,
Unknowing where, through trackless wilds of wood,
And, oft perplex'd in unfrequented ways,
As chance directs the steed unheeding strays:
Yet still each insect's buzz alarm'd she hears,
And every rustling leaf's vibration fears;
Now swift pursuers fancies in the wind,
And anxious longs, but dreads, to look behind;
Then far before she hears the tramp of horse,
And turns her steed and takes a different course;
Yet still, where thickest woods the glades imbrown,
Lest, seen bareheaded thus, she might be known.
As when perplex'd the timorous leveret flies,
Who distant hears the clamorous beagle's cries,

And by instinctive impulse, as pursued,
In circles tries her followers to elude;
So fled the queen, till, borne through many a round,
Dead Osric's corse at close of day she found;
And as her eyes th' adjoining scene explore,
She finds the glade and cave she left before;
His armour too, and all he left, she found,
As when she fled, lie scatter'd on the ground,
All but the turband head-dress that she wore,
And which from slaughter'd Osric Eric bore.
Though much alarm'd, yet more by toil oppress'd,
Her tender frame required both food and rest,
And here, the scene retired and cave invite
In shelter'd solitude to pass the night;
Nor, e'en should Osric's murderer still be near,
Had adverse fortune left her much to fear,
Since love-inspiring beauty still would lend
Its aid, and all she had, her life, defend.
The steed she tether'd, and the armour bore
Within the cave, and placed it on the floor;
But while she view'd it, shuddering horror stole
Through every nerve, and shook her conscious soul.
Could murder'd Alfgar's armour be the bed
On which his murderess should repose her head?
" But come what may," she cries, " let Heaven fulfill
Its bitterest cup; I yield me to its will.

Let demons howl, or vengeful ghosts appear,
No more my callous breast shall throb with fear:
Let the just forfeit for my crimes be paid, —
I welcome Fate, resign'd and undismay'd."

A couch of stone with mosses then she dress'd,
And stretch'd her weary limbs, and sunk to rest;
The corselet and the shield sustain'd her head,
And o'er her Osric's ample cloak was spread.

Thus in short broken slumbers lull'd she lay,
Till sweet the woodlark sang th' approach of day;
When, soothed by sleep, her beauteous eyes she opes,
And feels reviving spirits brighten hopes.

" Though inauspicious are these arms," she cries,
" They yet my sex and fortune may disguise:
Already have they brought me from the cell
Where vice and misery link'd in darkness dwell;
And thus conceal'd, secure I may abide,
Till doubtful war my destiny decide."

She tries the ponderous mail, but tries in vain, —
Her tender frame could scarce its weight sustain;
The helm alone, of lighter form, she wore,
And pendent at her side the broad sword bore.
Thus deck'd, again the courser she bestrode,
And forward, without knowing whither, rode;
But soon she meets some fugitives, who tell
What dire disasters had the Danes befell:

How Guthron, Hyngar, and great Eric lay
Exposed, to ravenous wolves and kites a prey;
How greedy fire from tent to tent had crept,
And all the camp in dire combustion swept.
Silent and sad the doleful tale she hears,
While closed the visor hides the trickling tears.
She then enquired the distance and the way,
Resolved love's mournful duties first to pay,
And faithful Eric's cold remains to save
From wrongs and insults in a peaceful grave,
Ere to the Saxon camp she bore the ring,
And claim'd her pardon from the grateful king.
" Yes, mighty warrior! though now unconfined,
In heaven's pure ether float thy godlike mind;
Though blest above, thou scarce canst deign to know
The toils and cares of mortals here below;
Yet welcome still may this faint effort prove
Of one whose only blessing was thy love,
Whose charms, though all unworthy, could impart
Some transient solace to thy noble heart.
And though no trophied pillar bear thy name,
Nor graven tablet chronicle thy fame;
Though no rich pageants decorate thy grave,
Nor painted scutcheons o'er thy coffin wave;
Though no paid minstrel, in high-sounding verse,
Thy glorious deeds and virtuous toils rehearse:

Yet shalt thou have what treasure cannot buy,
Nor power command, nor conquering arms supply,—
Love's genuine tear, and Friendship's tender sigh."

Thus saying, she pursued her lonely way,
And reach'd the camp as twilight closed the day.
Where late she heard loud factions rage around,
Nought now but silent solitude she found;
Save that, long struggling in the pangs of death,
Some mangled wretch yet faintly gasp'd for breath;
While hungry kites above expectant stray,
Or threatening hover o'er their destined prey:
Where thousands throng'd, and crowded tents were spread,
The dying groan'd, or silent lay the dead!
'Midst heaps of ashes, which yet faintly glow
As lightly o'er the summer breezes blow.
In horror fix'd awhile, she shuddering stood,
And mute survey'd the dreadful field of blood.
"Is this then proud Ambition's end," she cries;
"Is this immortal Glory's envied prize —
Thus mangled, in promiscuous heaps to spread
Heroes and monarchs with the vulgar dead,
And leave the best and bravest of mankind
Here, undistinguish'd from the meanest hind?
Yet vaster piles of slaughter'd foes shall tell
Where thy great heart, oppress'd by numbers, fell."

Thus saying, she explored each pile of dead,
And view'd each corselet, shield, and helmed head.
At length she saw a shield upon the ground,
Which Eric's seem'd, and near a body found,
Whose helm and crest appear'd like Eric's too;
But still the hauberk to her eyes was new.
Night thicken'd fast, and doubtful was the light, —
She quits the steed, nor trusts her distant sight.
Indented was the helm, and on his breast
The armed hoofs of prancing steeds had press'd;
The visor oped, her eyes could faintly trace
The alter'd features of her hero's face;
Still, too, the lingering warmth of life she found,
And faintly felt his feeble pulse rebound.
She raised and propp'd his head: his swimming eyes
In vain he opes, — still glimmering vision flies.
At length revived by night's refreshing breeze,
His wandering sense the Saxon helmet sees;
Darkly perceives that hostile is the crest, —
Then snatch'd her sword, and plunged it in her breast.
A shriek of death strikes shrilly to his heart,
And roused to sudden life, his senses start;
Through every nerve instinctive horror thrills,
And direst doubt awaked perception chills.
The voice, as yet, was not distinctly known;
But love half recognized its dying tone,

As memory, waking, dimly shew'd to thought
An image with despair and misery fraught.
The sinking form he clasp'd, and nearer drew,
Then pale in death her features met his view:
Her drooping head sunk like the opening flower,
That sinks o'erloaded by the vernal shower;
Slowly it sunk, upon his breast reposed,
While death's cold hand her beauteous eyelids closed.
" Ah stay!" he cries; " one fleeting moment stay!
Together let us tread the darksome way!
Behold me yet avenge and share thy death,
And mingle yet with thine my parting breath!"
She hears him not: he press'd her hand—'twas dead;
And kiss'd her lips — their vital warmth was fled.
" Yet! yet they move! — ah no! collapsed and pale,
They ne'er shall more her balmy breath exhale;
Ne'er more give utterance to that tuneful tongue,
On whose sweet music heavenly rapture hung,
Which playful wit with deepest thought combined,
And strongest sense with purest taste refined."
Aghast and silent here awhile he view'd
The fatal sword, yet reeking with her blood;
Then calmly said, " Yes! Frœna's words are true,
And Heaven reclaims its consecrated due;
Reclaims it thus from my polluted hand,
To smite rebellion 'gainst its dread command;

Thus brings me back, when life had ebbing fled,
The blood of one more dear than life to shed;
And, doubly guilty, sink her in the grave
When risking hers my worthless life to save!
God's high behests to scrutinise is vain,
And vainer still his justice to arraign:
Man's humble duty is but to fulfill,
In silent awe, the mandates of his will.

" Yet harsh it seems, thus, in the tenderest part,
With more than mortal pangs to rend the heart,
And punish youthful error's weak offence
With pains beyond the suffering powers of sense.
Death's direst tortures, 'midst reproach and scorn,
My soul's strong texture firmly could have borne,
Nor let a sigh the doom severe reprove,
Had niggard Mercy only spared my love.
But where affection every nerve had bared,
And purer bliss a keener sense prepared,
Frail nature wounded shrinks! — this erring sword,
The cause accursed, must now the cure afford.
Nor friends, nor country, now forbid to fly,
But life grown useless leaves me free to die;
Nor needs my aged father's grief bemoan
A son, his virtues must disdeign to own;
A wretch, by turns each viler passion's slave,
In crime and error prompt, — too slow to save.

"Yet ah! than parents, country, all more dear,
Departing spirit, yet indulgent hear!
If lingering still, reluctant to resign
Earth's loveliest mansion, e'en for bliss divine,
Thou goest, — ah! grant me, ere thy blood grow cold,
While thus my arms thy dear remains enfold,
To trace thy flight, and all unworthy join
My rash, but still my faithful, soul with thine!"
This said, he laid th' enchanted mail aside,
Took off his helmet, and his vest untied;
Then call'd on Ethelinde; and while he press'd
Her bleeding body to his throbbing breast,
Cried, "Thus together let us now depart!"
And plunged the reeking steel into his heart.
In mingled streams their blood united flows,
And equal fates their loves and errors close.
Their virtues only may their Judge record,
And Mercy spare should Justice not reward.
And may th' example long survive, to shew
What miseries from ungovern'd passions flow:
That no endowments Heaven to man e'er gave,
Unmix'd with prudence, from such ills can save:
That all wit's eloquence and beauty's charms,
Resistless strength, and matchless skill in arms,
Are gifts, which He alone, whose power bestows,
If given in anger or indulgence knows.

BOOK THE TWELFTH.

WHAT ills the lawless lust of empire breeds!
While conquest still desire of conquest feeds;
While cramm'd and bloated, and yet scorning rest,
Insatiate wishes ever swell the breast.
Realm after realm, though red-wing'd victory gains,
Another tempts, that still beyond remains;
Nor alps nor oceans bound ambition's view,
And all it sees, it sees but to subdue;
Till in the proud career at length o'erthrown,
The grave it occupies is scarce its own;
And th' only monument it leaves behind,
The wide-spread wreck and misery of mankind;
Inscribed in curses by avenging fate,
To damn for ever in relentless hate,
And shew the vanity of ill-earn'd fame,
Which daubs, not decorates, each favorite name.
Thus Guthron, lord supreme of all that lies,
From sea to sea, beneath the northern skies,
With every comfort, every joy of life,
Wealth, peace, obedience, and a beauteous wife,

Islands remote and distant kingdoms craves, —
Forsakes them all, and ocean's perils braves,
To die untimely, and at last to owe
The grave's cold mansion to a foreign foe.
For ALFRED piously consign'd to earth
Each chief, with honors due to rank and birth;
But first the valiant Saxons slain were laid
In holy ground, and virtue's tribute paid.
The chiefs upon their batter'd shields they bore,
While grateful friends around their loss deplore;
But more than all, for Edwin flow'd their tears,
When mute in grief his widow'd bride appears:
No sigh she breathed, no trickling tear she shed,
But pale and ghastly o'er him hung her head;
And all in vain the king and chieftains strove
Her soul, benumb'd in sorrow's ice, to move.
Entranced, with steadfast eye and folded hands,
Deaf and insensible to all, she stands;
Till by attendant handmaids borne away,
Still mute and senseless in the tent she lay.
Not so Thesnilda, Hengist's widow, view'd
Her youthful husband's corse in blood imbrued.
By hideous dreams alarm'd, the beauteous dame
From cold Northumbria's distant regions came:
Six days, in sorrow mute, had she suppress'd
The dire ill-bodings of her troubled breast;

Till now no more her anxious heart could bear
The dread suspense, but pants his fate to share.
" Perhaps, while here I loiter thus," she cries,
" He, wounded, in a tent neglected lies;
On life's last confine asks, but asks in vain,
Some helping hand to blunt the sting of pain;
To smooth with sympathy his rugged bed,
And, on affection's arm, sustain his head."
A favorite handmaid, then, and faithful squire,
She bids prepare what modest wants require;
By whom attended, at the dawn of day,
She mounts her palfrey, and pursues her way.
The faithful squire, old Edmund, rode before,
And in his arms her helpless infant bore;
The handmaid follow'd with reluctant mind,
And gladly had the favorite's post resign'd.
Thus firm, with dauntless spirit she proceeds,
Nor danger dreads, nor toil nor hunger heeds;
Though still ill-boding thoughts her soul molest,
And nightly visions banish soothing rest.
True were her bodings: as she now drew near
The camp, she meets her hapless husband's bier;
Then dropping from her steed, she cries, " Too late,
Alas! I come, to soothe or stop thy fate!
Thy short, alas! but noble race, is run,
And thus untimely sets thy morning sun.

Faint was my hope, but yet 'twas hope, that Heaven
Might still some respite to my woes have given;
Have, still let mercy with my prayer comply —
To soothe thy pangs, and catch thy parting sigh;
Transmit thy blessing to thy orphan son:
But since 'tis not, Heaven's will in all be done.
What most thy soul desired, it gave — to see
Thy sovereign conquer, and thy country free."
Here sobs and tears her faltering voice suppress'd,
And mute she sunk upon his clay-cold breast;
Till ALFRED came, and tried each healing art,
To soothe the troubles of her wounded heart;
With gleams of hope the clouds of grief dispell'd,
While in his arms her orphan son he held;
And begg'd her, as the unconscious infant smiled,
To own the parent who adopts her child.
Then slow in tears she raised her grateful head,
And silent to the regal tent was led;
While sad in solemn dirge they bear away
The dead, and deep in earth their bodies lay.
O'er beauteous Ethelinde's untimely bier
The monarch heaved a sigh, and dropp'd a tear;
Still clasp'd to Eric's bosom was she found, —
Near lay the sword which gave the fatal wound;
And still the youthful page's dress she wore,
And still the royal minstrel's token bore.

"Whate'er thy sins and errors past," he cried,
"Faithful, at length, and loyal hast thou died.
In peaceful slumber may thy spirit rest,
And only wake to be for ever bless'd;
May Heaven propitious thy offences hear,
And Mercy blot the record with a tear!
And oh! if yet my wrong'd Elsintha live,
She, too, with heavenly pity shall forgive."
"Yes! she forgives," a voice exclaim'd aloud,
As forth a stripling issued from the crowd.
"Who saved great ALFRED's life has claims from Heaven,
By every English heart to be forgiven:
Still were she living, grateful had we own'd
That thus, for every crime, she had atoned;
And, since to Heaven's more just tribunal fled,
Let all invoke its mercy on the dead."
This stripling was the unknown youth, who bore
The ebon lance, and golden hauberk wore;
And now the polish'd visor ope, display'd
The lovely features of the Mercian maid;
Who, having heard old Sigefred's intent,
And learn'd what proofs to try his heir were meant,
Of steed, and arms, and conscience pure possess'd,
Resolved the prize of virtue to contest;
And, if victorious, to her hero bring
A dower deserving of a patriot king.

The prize obtain'd, she came, a wandering knight,
And shared the toils and glories of the fight;
O'erthrew the mightiest champion of the foe,
Yet left him arm'd to avenge her house's woe;
By Heaven's all-guiding hand unconscious led,
Dispensed its justice on the guilty head;
And caused her murder'd brother's Mercian crest
To point his sword against his murderer's breast;
Deceive the lover; and direct the blow
To wound a victim, where he meant a foe.

Enraptured ALFRED clasp'd her to his breast,
And Heaven's full bounty gratefully confess'd:
" Complete is now the triumph of our arms,
Since virtue crowns them in Elsintha's charms;
And all I now have left to ask of Heaven,
Is but to merit all that it hath given."

Their queen elect, the stout Northumbrians own,
Bless'd that such virtues shall adorn the throne;
And all the auspicious union hail, that joins
The Saxon realms, and England's force combines.

Good Bishop Ludulf then unites their hands,
In wedlock's pure and consecrated bands;
And learned Osbert, from his sacred caves,
Attends the union which his country saves;
Then pours enraptured his prophetic lays,
And Time's mysterious visions thus displays: —

" Eternal blessings crown the days that close
The long career of wasted Britain's woes;
When victory thus in peace secure unites
The monarch's sceptre with his people's rights,
And consecrated ties of wedded love
The bond and basis of their union prove!

" Yet, though the raven's bloody wings be shorn,
Though from his beak his mangled prey be torn;
Behold again his sable plumage spring,
Again to Britain spoil and slaughter bring!

" But, though awhile o'er all the north he reign,
Still shall the triumph of his arms be vain.
The Norman lion fierce extends his paws,
And both beneath his iron sceptre draws;
On laws and rights, with ruthless fury treads,
And o'er the land his prowling plunderers spreads.

" Nor needs the Saxon yet his fate bewail, —
His steed again victorious shall prevail;
Again shall favoring Heaven befriend his cause,
And fix in adamant great ALFRED's laws.
Yes! the proud fabric, which his hand shall raise,
Shall stand, the wonder of all future days;
And endless gratitude, in endless fame,
From happy millions bless the founder's name.
There Liberty, sedate on Order's throne,
Shall teach admiring kings her charms to own;

While all, secure beneath their equal sway,
The lawful monarch, not the man, obey.
"Though round it storms of civil discord rage,
And greedy tyrants wars incessant wage;
Though secret fraud and violence combine,
And sly corruption slowly undermine:
Yet loftier still the sacred fane shall rise,
And lift its lights to shine through distant skies;
Its base o'er continents and islands spread,
And o'er the boundless ocean raise its head.
The world's eternal model shall it be,
Whence men may learn to live discreetly free;
And, safe to innocence, itself insure,
From wrongs protected, and in rights secure.
"But ah! yet from my aching vision hide
The direful feuds which kindred hosts divide;
When swords to swords engaged, and shields to shields,
With native blood they dye their native fields;
While each, forgetful of his country's rights,
But for the choice of fools or tyrant's fights;
And warring thousands lance to lance oppose,
But for a name, or color of a rose.
"Nor yet her distant fields let conquest shew,
Nor boast her glories traced in scenes of woe —
The smoking city, and deserted plain,
And all ambition's melancholy train.

Yet, mighty victors! yet suspend the lance!
'Tis not for you to rule o'er conquer'd France;
Bless'd, if contented with these isles alone,
You seek in their prosperity your own.
Ne'er draw the sword, but to repress the strong,
Protect the just, and guard the weak from wrong;
To curb ambition; and the equal reign
Of balanced power on virtue's base maintain.
Amidst your guilty glories, Truth shall trace
More lasting records of more foul disgrace:
Your murder'd captives, and the sentence dire
Which dooms the virgin warrior to the fire;
The patriot heroine, whose victorious sword
A generous foe, when vanquish'd, had adored;
But whose hard sufferings and unsullied fame
Blast all your trophies with eternal shame.

Lo! the rough Cambrian, with despotic sway,
Sweeps all the hierarch's pomp and power away;
By lustful fury led, does what the wise
Might praise when done, although not dare advise;
Without intending, breaks the galling chain
Which priestcraft forged free conscience to restrain;
And, in tyrannic power's extreme abuse,
Prepares what purer freedom shall produce;
What, moulded by his wiser daughter's hand,
The solid bulwark of the state shall stand,

And leave this isle, as meant by Heaven to be,
The station firm of virtuous liberty.
"But, ere yet settled, hark! what dismal cries,
From human victims wrapp'd in flames, arise!
In grim delight, see saints around them stand,
Present the crucifix, and shake the brand;
Nor sex, nor age, their cruel fury spares, —
Its parent's pangs the puling infant shares.
In vain the tears on trembling beauty's cheek,
In vain heart-rending sighs for pity seek;
What melts the savage, fiercer saints defy, —
Chain'd to the stake, behold the victim die!
Unmoved her shrieks of agony they hear, —
'In Hell her tortures will be more severe.'
"Stay, murderous fiends! were endless torments due
For transient sins, such torments were for you —
For you, who serve your God but to defame,
With Hell's worst attributes, his injured name;
And, underneath that sacred shield, to hide
Your own base envy, cruelty, and pride.
"And shall distinctions, which none understand,
Thus shame and desolate each Christian land?
Can metaphysic jargon have the charm,
Each fiercer passion in its cause to arm?
Yes! when men differ, and yet know not why,
Motives their passions in themselves supply;

And thus self-nourish'd, with resistless force
Rush where no reason e'er obstructs their course;
Since all th' importance of the cause believe,
Where none can any cause at all perceive.
"Drunk with such selfish zeal, behold a crew
Of piebald monks, the crimes they make pursue;
Frame subtile questions to perplex the mind,
And hatch the heresies they wish to find;
With fire and faggot grace and mercy teach,
And heavenly love in hellish torments preach;
Drag from the grief-distracted husband's arms
His youthful bride in all her virgin charms;
Maidens from mothers' fond embraces tear,
To breathe the dungeon's pestilential air, —
Where those soft limbs, which Nature form'd for love,
Their direst engine's direst force must prove;
Till torn and mangled, her disjointed frame
Retains just life enough to feel the flame,
Whose fiercer stimulants of torture close
The last sad scene of the poor sufferer's woes.
Nor yet must parent, friend, or brother moan, —
Who weep her fate shall find her fate their own.
"Yet, sure some demon with delusive light,
In waking dreams misleads my mental sight;
Some vile traducer of the human race
Such monsters feigns, creation to disgrace!

Ah no! these visions simple truth unfold, —
Too soon these realms such horrors shall behold.
Stretch'd on the rack, lo! beauteous Ascue lies!
Lo! the fell judge the torturer's place supplies!
(The torturer's place, who could no longer bear,
Hard as he was, those lovely limbs to tear.)
Then see her, mangled thus and piecemeal torn,
To die in flames, still quick to anguish, borne;
And ask if Hell so foul a fiend can find
As man, when Superstition rules his mind.
Indignant devils might exulting swear,
Proud of their Hell, that no such fiend was there.
Yet, numbers more yon vaulted cells conceal,
Who Ascue's fate await, and Ascue's sufferings feel.
"There grim Despair, and Misery, and Pain,
In darkness, solitude, and silence, reign;
While fierce Ambition, Avarice, and Pride,
Above, in consecrated forms, preside:
All gainful game pursue, but never heed
What heresies infect the pauper's creed.
E'en sainted heroes from the throne descend,*
Their aid in such dire cruelties to lend;

* Ferdinandus III. vir omnibus animæ et corporis dotibus, morum probitate tanta, ut sancti cognomen tulerit; non magis populi favore factum, quam vitæ meritis datum, fortior, an sanctior, an felicior esset, multi dubitaverint ——— hæriticis infensus maxime, *quos tormentis exagitandos curabat; solitus ipse quasi victimarius, ignem*

With their own hands the horrid rites partake,
The victims bind, and fix them to the stake;
With savage joy, the faggots round them pile,
Apply the brands, and at their sufferings smile.
" And can, too, woman harden thus her heart?
Can she from sex and nature thus depart?
To dogmatise in dark disputes aspire,
And all who differ doom to die by fire?
Yes; here th' unnatural monster shall be seen,
And England blush to own her persecuting queen.
" Ah, why, ye sad prophetic visions! trace
The feeble vices of the Scottish race: —
The prating pedant, nature form'd a fool,
And learning only makes absurd by rule;

arsuris manu lignaque subjicere, improbitatis odio. — Marianæ de reb. Hispan. Hist. l. xii. c. xi. et xiii. l. viii. Yet though this learned and eloquent Historian's faith was sufficiently strong to obliterate all moral feeling or perception in this instance, it seems to have been most reasonably lax and infirm in others; as when he explains the miracle of Joshua, said to have been repeated on a similar occasion in a war with the Moors: Sole etiam a cursu retento; quo dies largior esset, et major hostium strages: sic vulgo jactatum, sensibus ancipiti prælio, atque inter metum et fiduciam conturbatis, tempus metiri qui vacat? Hora una multorum instar est præ cupiditate, festinatione, curaque, multa præterea in periculo creduntur facilè, finguntur impunè. — Ib. c. xxii. During the spontaneous workings of an active and vigorous mind, the mask, be it ever so carefully worn, will be liable to slip aside; and the wearer forget that he is a Jesuit writing the history of Spain under King Philip II.

The shallow hypocrite, who still intends
To dupe his foes, but only dupes his friends;
The courtly profligate, the bigot sour,
Successive struggling for despotic power;
The humbled nation to their yoke enslaved,
And only by a stranger's valor saved?
Ah! why to Fancy's mournful mirror bring
The maddening people, and the headless king?
Why shew Religion's mild angelic face
Grimly distorted into fierce grimace?

"As, in its master's hands, the Thracian lyre
Could love and harmony through all inspire,
The dullest brutes enrapture, and assuage
The fiercest tiger's or hyena's rage;
While, rudely touch'd, its jarring strings excite
The basest village curs to snarl and fight;
So, temper'd by its Master's hand divine,
Religion could each passion's dross refine;
Exalt, expand, and purify the soul,
Till, freed from baser matter's dull control,
In bright effulgence heaven-born virtues rise
Again to commune with their native skies.
But when rash folly dares its light dispense,
They only dazzle and confound the sense;
Disturb the brain, and teach the addled mind
Heaven's will in Hell's worst attributes to find.

"But brighter visions now transport my soul,
And Time's vast volume to my eyes unroll.
See, Ramillies and Blenheim rise to view,
And millions, rescued from a tyrant, shew!
More bright than Agincourt's or Cressy's fields,
Since justice here the sword of valor wields,
And checks awhile the lawless lust of power,
Which soon distracted Europe shall devour.

"Ah! see remote the infant storm arise,
And darkly lour beneath Atlantic skies!
See the proud parent, by false friends beguiled,
Too sternly frown upon the froward child;
Let selfish pride foul lust of lucre feed,
To guide her councils, and her senates lead;
With kindred blood her impious hands to stain,
Corruption's means for greedy power to gain;
And, in her children's servitude, procure
The golden chains that shall her own ensure!

"But yet, ambitious meddling Gaul, beware,
And cautious shun the Transatlantic snare!
Soon falls the sovereign of a land of slaves,
Who, led by interest, others' freedom saves.
Instant his subjects catch the sacred fire,
And every bosom restless hopes inspire;
But never taught to feel its temperate glow,
Let passion's gusts its flame to fury blow;

And, by no laws of wisdom tried withstood,
Pour the wild tides of anarchy and blood.
From realm to realm the wasteful torrents blaze,
While armies fly, and monarchs trembling gaze;
Till from its base the social fabric hurl'd,
Portends destruction to the frantic world.

"But see, through all, the Cyrnian eagle rise,
And cleave, with steady wing, the troubled skies!
Where'er through clouds and storms he wings his way,
Kings, priests, and demagogues, alike obey;
Before him empires and republics fall,
And power despotic overshadows all;
With firm and vigorous grasp he holds the chain,
While factions growl beneath, and rage in vain:
On servile thrones obedient monarchs sit,
And mightiest nations tremble and submit.

"Nor yet, proud exiles, Heaven's decrees arraign, —
Of wrongs yourselves provoked you now complain.
E'en from your own unjust oppression springs
This curse of nations, and this scourge of kings.
Lo, yon poor isle, that, sunk in mute despair,
Sees ruffian hands her bleeding entrails tear,
A puling infant nursles at her breast,
To crush th' oppressor, and avenge th' oppress'd;
And wave, by victory's blood-stain'd arms unfurl'd,
His purple banners o'er the prostrate world!

Proscribed and wretched, now you curse the hour
You seized the worthless prize of lawless power;
Where, coil'd within, the embryo serpent lay,
Till ripen'd venom roused him to his prey;
And, mighty grown, his giant spires enfold
Subjected realms, and captive empires hold.

"Almighty Power, from whose dark judgments flow
The fates of all who rule or serve below;
If yet thy awful justice hath design'd
To smite, in wrath, the vices of mankind;
Let Famine, Plague, or Pestilence fulfill
The destined purpose of thy sovereign will;
At once the dreadful blow of death be given,
Immediate from the avenging hand of Heaven:
But let not *one* again extend o'er all
His iron sceptre, and the world enthrall;
To sink it in a prison's silent gloom,
And leave th' oppress'd no refuge but the tomb!

"The vows of myriads Heaven indulgent hears,
And dauntless Britain still her standard rears;
Still undismay'd beholds her lion stand,
The firm protector of the sea and land;
Amidst the wreck of empires, stand alone,
And proudly need no succour but her own.
Though waste improvident her vitals drain,
And home-bred leeches suck at every vein,

With new occasions new resources grow,
And real riches from fictitious flow:
While, irresistible, her natives sweep
The boundless bosom of the subject deep;
Remotest continents and isles unite,
And each with th' other's separate gifts requite;
Diffuse what Nature had to each confined,
And make Heaven's bounty common to mankind.

"Hail, sacred Commerce! Thy prolific gains
No tear bedews, no blood unhallow'd stains;
No ransack'd town, or famish'd village moans,
Nor plunder'd province saddens with her groans:
But spreading blessings, as thyself art bless'd,
Thou more bestowest, as of more possess'd;
Givest taste and elegance with wealth combined,
And social joys by liberal arts refined.

"For thee, for Justice, Liberty, and Law,
Let Britain still her sword undaunted draw;
And whether Heaven success or failure send,
Eternal glory shall her cause attend.
Nor, though degenerate nations hug the chain,
And gloomy silence own the despot's reign;
Though, sunk in self, the Transatlantic race
Their British birth and liberty disgrace,
And, from their parent's spoils the boon to share,
E'en forge the fetters which theirselves must wear;

Shall every spring of freedom torpid lie,
Or every sense of generous feeling die.
" No! though insatiate Power awhile control
The subjugated earth from pole to pole;
Yet frail and transient is the mightiest state
Upheld by Fear, but undermined by Hate.
O'erbent, the elastic weapon shall recoil,
And his own instruments their master foil;
In shiver'd splinters from his hand rebound,
And, barb'd with death, his inmost vitals wound;
While forward still o'erstrain'd exertions press,
And perish bloated with their own success.
" For see, what flames illume the polar skies!
An empire's seat in blazing ruin lies!
To shame each freeborn son whom fear enslaves,
The slave by birth th' inflated tyrant braves;
'Mid Scythia's snows, devotes his little all,
And bids his hut, his only shelter, fall;
Scatters his self the flame, content to lie
In earth's cold lap beneath the freezing sky,
And, numb'd in ice, exults with patriot glow
To think *that* hut shall ne'er protect a foe;
Clasps his expiring infants to his heart,
Whose throbs may still some genial warmth impart;
Raises by turns each cold and drooping head,
And sees the glaze of death each cheek o'erspread:

Yet, still exulting, cries, with grim delight,
'Thus, too, th' invader feels the piercing night;
Thus too, unhoused, at length he learns to know
What miseries from his dire ambition flow;
Partakes the pang, and, as yon flames aspire,
Beholds, in deep despair, his funeral pyre!'
"Yes, gallant victim! But on slaves like you
Those miseries fall, and not where justly due;
The herd promiscuous, thus to slaughter driven,
Invoke, like you, the tardy wrath of Heaven;
But he who drives — dark, sullen, and sedate, —
Sees, all unmoved, his suffering army's fate;
Enwrapt in furs, secluded in his car,
Calmly surveys the direful waste of war.
In vain around desponding myriads groan,
He feels no loss or suffering but his own;
Only regrets the failure of his plan,
Nor heeds its broken tools and refuse — man!
The useless rubbish that obstructs his way,
When base desertion dreads unsafe delay.
"With cold arithmetic, he counts the cost
Of steeds and soldiers, guns and generals, lost;
What easiest is supplied regrets the least,
And bids the rider die to save the beast.
Around his guarded tent each night they lie,
In frozen heaps, and still by thousands die;

While all, whom cold and Cossacks chance to spare,
Disease, and pestilence, and famine share.
The starved who live devour the starved who die,
Or slaughter'd comrades dire repasts supply;
The mangled limbs they tear while yet they bleed,
While palpitates the flesh on which they feed;
With kites, and crows, and ravenous dogs, contend
To share the carcass of each dying friend:
While near fierce wolves and hungry vultures stray,
Assert their rights, and vindicate their prey,
With screams ill-omen'd scare the deadly night,
And speed the shuddering soul's reluctant flight;
Above, loud-howling storms in whirlwinds blow,
And, pile on pile, diffuse the drifted snow,
With icy mountains man and beast surround,
And dead and living in one tomb confound.
" And can Despair no vengeful heart excite
Its own protracted sufferings to requite?
Will none while yet he feebly gasps for breath,
Against his murderer point the tube of death?
No orphan'd father, brother, son, or friend,
To glorious vengeance consecrate his end?
Ah no! benumb'd in torpid grief they lie,
And let the cause of all their misery fly: —
Alone he flies: a single sledge contains
Whate'er of martial pomp and pride remains:

Disguised, unknown, through trackless wilds he goes,
Deserts his followers, and eludes his foes,
To blast with sordid, selfish fears, his fame,
And make men scorn who only cursed his name.
" And what's the boon which buys this foul disgrace,
Bright glory's hard-earn'd records to efface? —
A few short months of trouble, toil, and care,
Which Heaven for guilt and worse disgrace may spare,
To see each night the visionary blade
Against his heart by vengeance just display'd;
To see each pallid face with lurid smile
The silent curses of the soul beguile;
Still trembling at the fears his self inspires,
To drag life's load till sickening nature tires:
While slow disease with torture less refined
Augments and aids each torture of the mind;
And lingering death, still ever seeming near,
Barbs every present pang with worse to fear.
In vain the chace by day, the feast by night,
The pall'd, o'erlabor'd sense, to joy invite;
In vain would flattery's tongue, or beauty's smile,
The urgent horrors of remorse beguile:
Alas! no refuge can their victim save, —
None but the last sad refuge of the grave;
And this he flies. See, gathering from the pole,
In clouds on clouds, pursuing tempests roll!

In vain the Elbe, the Rhine, the Seine oppose
Floods after floods, — the storm still onward goes;
Drives him from empire's long-polluted seat,
To strut the sovereign of his mean retreat.

" But, long by tempests toss'd, the troubled tide
Still heaves its billows, though the winds subside;
And, launch'd upon the troubled waves, once more
He sails, to founder on a rougher shore.
A humble suppliant then behold him wait
His doom from those who most endured his hate;
And, only anxious worthless life to save,
Dishonor, insult, and the dungeon brave —
The proudest despot, and the meanest slave.

" Had power enlarged, or glory raised his mind
To be the friend, while master of mankind;
Obey'd by all, had he but wisely strove
To fix his empire in their grateful love;
On law and liberty secured his throne, —
All, in its safety, had beheld their own:
Unmoved by rival claims or factious rage,
His toilsome youth hath led to tranquil age;
And more of life than e'er to man was given
Seem'd less than gratitude should ask of Heaven:
Bequeathing blessings, while by millions bless'd,
In full-blown honors had he sunk to rest;
And on his tomb the glorious record stood
Of one who, great, still labor'd to be good;

The shallow hypocrite, who still intends
To dupe his foes, but only dupes his friends;
The courtly profligate, the bigot sour,
Successive struggling for despotic power;
The humbled nation to their yoke enslaved,
And only by a stranger's valor saved?
Ah! why to Fancy's mournful mirror bring
The maddening people, and the headless king?
Why shew Religion's mild angelic face
Grimly distorted into fierce grimace?

"As, in its master's hands, the Thracian lyre
Could love and harmony through all inspire,
The dullest brutes enrapture, and assuage
The fiercest tiger's or hyena's rage;
While, rudely touch'd, its jarring strings excite
The basest village curs to snarl and fight;
So, temper'd by its Master's hand divine,
Religion could each passion's dross refine;
Exalt, expand, and purify the soul,
Till, freed from baser matter's dull control,
In bright effulgence heaven-born virtues rise
Again to commune with their native skies.
But when rash folly dares its light dispense,
They only dazzle and confound the sense;
Disturb the brain, and teach the addled mind
Heaven's will in Hell's worst attributes to find.

"But brighter visions now transport my soul,
And Time's vast volume to my eyes unroll.
See, Ramillies and Blenheim rise to view,
And millions, rescued from a tyrant, shew!
More bright than Agincourt's or Cressy's fields,
Since justice here the sword of valor wields,
And checks awhile the lawless lust of power,
Which soon distracted Europe shall devour.

"Ah! see remote the infant storm arise,
And darkly lour beneath Atlantic skies!
See the proud parent, by false friends beguiled,
Too sternly frown upon the froward child;
Let selfish pride foul lust of lucre feed,
To guide her councils, and her senates lead;
With kindred blood her impious hands to stain,
Corruption's means for greedy power to gain;
And, in her children's servitude, procure
The golden chains that shall her own ensure!

"But yet, ambitious meddling Gaul, beware,
And cautious shun the Transatlantic snare!
Soon falls the sovereign of a land of slaves,
Who, led by interest, others' freedom saves.
Instant his subjects catch the sacred fire,
And every bosom restless hopes inspire;
But never taught to feel its temperate glow,
Let passion's gusts its flame to fury blow;

And load with vapors dense the heavy air,
Which dully stagnates round the mountains bare;
Or choaks the dells, by annual torrents torn,
Whose rugged sides all vegetation scorn,
Yet darkly shade the gloomy chasms below,
Where shoals of sand the beds of rivulets shew,
Whose only sources transient rains supply,
In turbid floods to-day, to-morrow dry.

" There still he struts in pageantry of state,
And strives to earn contempt, as well as hate;
There in mock majesty affects to reign,
The little despot of his menial train;
With tinsel titles still his fate beguiles,
Though sneers of scorn intrude through flattery's smiles;
And forms of homage serve but to expose
That vanity which out of meanness grows;—
The plumage of conceit, and froth of pride,
Which only pity bids us not deride;
Like the poor maniac's, who, enthroned in straw,
And crown'd with paper, seems his court to awe;
With fetter'd hand his bulrush sceptre sways,
And acts the tyrant whom no slave obeys.

" While there, in grim despair, the waste he views,
His heart each dire unsated wish renews;
Laments to think his labors have been vain
To desolate alike each wide domain,

And make each fertile, fair, and peopled shore,
As dreary as what now his eyes explore.
Freedom's last bulwark, wrapt in vengeful flame,
Had been no more, but in her dreaded name;
Through wastes of pestilence exhaled from blood,
The hated Thames had pour'd her silent flood;
And, o'er each verdant hill and cultured plain,
Fierce wolves and bears resumed their ancient reign;
Each busy port where commerce piles its stores
To mews and cormorants resign'd its shores,
And nature, free as when the world began,
Trembled no more beneath her tyrant, man;
Or one hard iron sceptre crush'd his race,
Till, brutal grown, and as their station base,
All had become one undistinguish'd horde
Of savage slaves to serve one savage lord.
No! though by sordid, selfish interests join'd,
Confederate monarchs league to crush mankind;
The sacred name of holy faith disgrace,
To suit the purposes of passions base;
Short shall their triumph be: no human force
Can stop the Nile's increase, or ocean's course;
Though millions toil to pile up mound on mound,
One heaven-raised wave shall all their toil confound.
On paper wings, the intellectual rays
Shall o'er the earth diffuse their quickening blaze;

Nor more can mortal power their speed restrain
Than quench the sun, or burst attraction's chain:
Transient obstructions only urge their course,
As press'd combustion bursts with double force.
" Behold again the venerable name
Of Greece aspire to liberty and fame;
Burst from barbarian darkness, and renew
The sacred light from which all science grew, —
The hallow'd fountain, from which first arose
Th' eternal stream which still expanding flows;
Dispensing purest gleams of thought refined,
To cleanse the soul, and organise the mind,
And raise the intellectual powers of man
Above the scale of dwindled nature's plan.
Shall it, from long concealment, burst to view,
And th' ancient splendor of its currents shew,
Pouring their tides of melody sublime,
Amidst the venerable wrecks of time?
" And do not Europe's kings and states unite,
In faith's and mercy's sacred cause to fight;
In just defence the cross's banner raise,
And purge it from the sins of darker days?
Ah no! fell murder's groans, and direr torture's screams,
Dispel th' illusion of these flattering dreams.

That sacred isle, whence intellectual light
First pierced the darkness of surrounding night,
And, in the splendors of th' Homeric muse,
Could o'er the earth its quickening rays diffuse,
Inhales from Christian blood infected air,
That plague may sweep whom glutted rage might spare;
Sees from the parent's arms the virgin torn,
To foul pollution by barbarians borne!—
She, who by eastern jealousy confined,
To no one earthly thought had oped her mind,
To every outrage which depraved desire
Can in the basest of mankind inspire
Is thus abandon'd; where religious hate
Makes lust the means its cruelty to sate,
And guards each passage where despair might fly;
Nor even grants the privilege to die!
Shall Christian potentates, too, lend their aid
To spread the horrors of this direful trade?
Shall they yet dare to claim the name of men,
Who guard such victims to pollution's den?*
And is it then for Afric's race alone
That partial pity in your hearts is shewn?

* The children of the murdered Sciotes were carried to the Moorish markets in Sardinian and Maltese vessels, under convoy of an Austrian ship of war!!!

Can none but sable savages obtain
Relief from wrongs, or sympathy with pain?
Alas! to slavery born, to wrongs inured,
Transferr'd and sold, they little more endured;
By habit callous, and by nature base,
They neither feel, nor understand disgrace;
But to corporeal sense in all confined,
Ne'er know the agonies that rend the mind,
When wounded honor swells with proud disdeign,
When conscience mourns th' involuntary stain,
And barbs each sting of sorrow and of pain.

"And do not statesmen blush to bear the name
Of Christians, Christian charity to shame;
Against their God his fiercest foes sustain
In deeds of blood, to make his sufferings vain;
And, only meaning their own selfish ends,
Become the worst of foes in treacherous friends?

"Yet, let not arms for modes of faith contend,
Unless of all the freedom to defend;
To break, not brandish, persecution's rod,
When men would seem more wise and just than God.*
Know that, had his omnipotence design'd
One mode of faith to govern every mind,

* Shall mortal man be more just than God? *Job*, iv. 17.

To all alike its truth had been display'd,
Nor needed thy presumptuous, meddling aid.
In vain our dim and feeble eyes would trace
The ways of mercy, or the means of grace:
As well the insect, which, with filmy wing,
Collects its sweets, or points its venom'd sting,
Might, in its waxen cell, define the plan
Of social order, given by Heaven to man;
Or, with its short and doubtful vision, trace
Th' unnumber'd worlds that roll through boundless space.

"Let rival sects by rival virtues shew
The source divine from which their tenets flow;
And purer morals, charity, and love,
A juster claim to purer doctrines prove:
Till Christians, Pagans, Mussulmen, and Jews,
In joint benevolence, their lights diffuse;
And shew that Providence to each hath given
What, well employ'd, may lead alike to heaven.

"Then timid Virtue ne'er shall need a lie,
Nor selfish Prudence its hypocrisy;
But Truth and Error, while alike sincere,
And free from moral guilt, be free from fear;
Open to all the roads of wealth and fame,
For all that talent well employ'd may claim:

And as the dews and rains refreshing fall,
In general charity, alike on all;
So social blessings all mankind embrace,
Nor vain distinctions of opinion trace,
In earthly scales to weigh out heavenly grace."

THE END.

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